

POEMS BY
MATTHEW ARNOLD



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From a photograph by Elliott and Fry

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

ALICE MEYNELL

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them and to soothe. As though they needed no more than these unmanly ministrations! As though to be soothed in an ill-temper and comforted in an ill-humour were the chief needs of a race wanting the law, the code of laws, the example, the threat, the prick, and the curb. He did himself injustice, and his empty phrase should not have been allowed to stand. Matthew Arnold's own poetry is not content with that effeminate office. It is apt to complain, indeed, and to stir somewhat uneasily under the inexorable Hand; but in reading we are aware of a more stable, a more responsible, nay, a more truly sensitive mind beneath, and of a nobility and steadfastness not to be finally shaken or displaced.

His poetry belongs to his youth, and even to an imitative stage of youth, which in his case must have lasted long. Much of it has the little scholarly strut of a lad conscious of an uncommon interest in the classics. We shall perhaps do his talent, his intellect, and his distinction the best justice if we read much of his verse, lofty though it is, as the work of a young man,—a lad much belated—and then we admire him as a wonderful boy indeed. Some such conviction that his own work was very young, some such forbearing admiration as a man feels for his deciduous impulses and faculties, it may be that kept

his muse silent in later life and prevented the revision which even grammatically, even in the matter of Cockney rhymes, his poems should have received as years went by.

It is clear that the English poets were not among Arnold's influential authors. We cannot believe him in love with the Elizabethan flower or the seventeenth-century fruit. His work has, it may be said, older and more respectable roots; at any rate it has not those, which are English and of the poetry of poetry. But we do perceive him to be tenderly in love with Nature, the Nature so specially revealed to England. Exquisite passages of "The Scholar Gipsy", and many another, give us that assurance:

"The warm, green-muffled Cumnor hills",
and

"The stripling Thames",

are words in all readers' memories. For the more daring page that describes the northward Oxus we have, in all our admiration, again the word successful. It is very splendid, and a great and high achievement. But this is not the praise we give to Tennyson's few lines in "The Passing of Arthur". It has not the absolute greatness of that "level moon".

Not having the English sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries in his blood (hardly more than Byron had), Matthew Arnold is none the less a high English poet of his time. We may think he would have done well to choose otherwise, but he chose with decision and with no change of taste. Of many of the poets we love, we have nothing to say of their selection or their fastidiousness; but perhaps we may call him the master of those who choose.

ALICE MEYNELL.

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The Scholar Gipsy



Go, for they call you, Shepherd, from the
hill;

Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled
cotes:

No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their
throats,

Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another
head.

But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone
to rest,

And only the white sheep are some-
times seen

Cross and recross the strips of moon-
blanch'd green;

Come, Shepherd, and again renew
the quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
In this high field's dark corner, where
he leaves

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

His coat, his basket, and his earthen
cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the
sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his
stores to use;
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is
borne;
With distant cries of reapers in the
corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's
day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-
reap'd field,
And here till sundown, Shepherd, will
I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet
poppies peep
And round green roots and yellowing
stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their per-
fumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I
am laid,

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

And bower me' from the August sun
with shade;

And the eye travels down to Oxford's
towers:

And 'near me' on the grass lies Glanvil's
book—

Come, let me read the oft-read tale
again,

The story of that Oxford scholar poor
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive
brain.

Who, tired of knocking at Preferment's
door,

One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy
lore,

And roam'd the world with that wild
brotherhood,

And came, as most men deem'd, to
little good,

But came to Oxford and his friends
no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he
knew

Met him, and of his way of life en-
quired.

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy
crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they
desired
The working of men's brains;
And they can bind them to what thoughts
they will:
"And I," he said, "the secret of their
art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world
impart:
But it needs happy moments for this
skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no
more,
But rumours hung about the country
side
That the lost Scholar long was seen to
stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and
tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of
gray,
The same the Gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in
spring:
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire
moors,

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

On the warm ingle bench, the smock-
frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their
entering.

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would
fly:

And I myself seem half to know thy
looks,

And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on
thy trace;

And boys who in lone wheatfields scare
the rooks

I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet
place;

Or in my boat I lie

Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer
heats,

Mid wide grass meadows which the
sunshine fills,

And watch the warm green-muffled
Cunner hills,

And wonder if thou haunt'st their
shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired
ground.

Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights,
have met

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-
lock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers
wet,
As the slow punt swings round:
And leaning backwards in a pensive
dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of
flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant wood-
land bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moon-
lit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no
more.

Maidens who from the distant hamlets
come

To dance around the Fyfield elm in
May,

Oft through the darkening fields have
seen thee roam,

Or cross a stile into the public
way.

Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white ane-
mone—

Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of
summer eves—

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

And purple orchises with spotted
leaves—

But none has words she can report
of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-
time's here

In June, and many a scythe in sunshine
flames,

Men who through those wide fields of
breezy grass

Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the
glittering Thames,

To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near

Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure

spare,

Thy dark vague eyes, and soft ab-
stracted air;

But, when they came from bathing,
thou wert gone.

At some loan homestead in the Cumner
hills,

Where at her open door the housewife
darns,

Thou hast been seen, or hanging on
a gate

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

To watch the threshers in the mossy
barns.

Children, who early range these slopes
and late

For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee watching, all an April
day,

The springing pastures and the feeding
kine;

And mark'd thee, when the stars come
out and shine,

Through the long dewy grass move
slow away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley
wood,

Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edged
way

Pitch their smok'd tents, and every
bush you see

With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds
of gray,

Above the forest ground call'd Thes-
saly—

The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears
at all;

So often has he known thee past him
stray

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd
 spray,
And waiting for the spark from
 Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
 Where home through flooded fields foot-
 travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden
 bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the
 snow,
Thy face towards Hinksey and its
 wintry ridge?
And thou hast climb'd the hill
And, gain'd the white brow of the
 Cunner range,
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the
 snow-flakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church
 hall—
Then sought thy straw in some
 sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years
 are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford
 halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale
 inscribe

THE SCHOLAR · GIPSY

That thou wert wander'd from the
studious walls

To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy
tribe:

And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet church-
yard laid;

Some country nook, where o'er thy
unknown grave

Tall grasses and white flowering nettles
wave—

Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's
shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of
hours.

For what wears out the life of mortal
men?

'Tis that from change to change their
being rolls:

'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.

Till, having used our nerves with bliss
and teen,

And tired upon a thousand schemes our
wit,

To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we
have been.

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou
perish, so?

Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one*
desire:

Else wert thou long since number'd
with the dead—

Else hadst thou spent, like other men,
thy fire.

The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;

But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age

And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's
page,

Because thou hadst—what we, alas,
have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with
powers

Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other
things;

Free from the sick fatigue, the languid
doubt,

Which much to have tried, in much
been baffled, brings.

O Life unlike to ours!

Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for
what he strives,

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

And each half lives a hundred different
lives;

Who wait like thee, but not, like
thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven:
and we,

Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly
will'd,

Whose insight never has borne fruit in
deeds,

Whose vague resolves never have been
fulfill'd;

For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments
new;

Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won
to-day—

Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it
too?

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer; and amongst us
One,

Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Tells us his misery's birth and growth
and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was
fed,
And how the breast was sooth'd, and
how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pipe,
And wish the long unhappy dream would
end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try
to bear
With close-lipp'd Patience for our only
friend,
Sad Patience, too near neighbour to
Despair:
But none has hope like thine.
Thou through the fields and through the
woods dost stray,
Roaming the country side, a truant
boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time
away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and
clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling
Thames;

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Before this strange disease of modern
life,

With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts,
was rife—

Fly hence, our contact fear!

Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering
wood!

Averse, as Dido did, with gesture stern,
From her false friend's approach in
Hades turn,

Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,

Still clutching the inviolable shade,

With a free onward impulse brushing
through,

By night, the silver'd branches of the
glade—

Far on the forest skirts, where none
pursue,

On some mild pastoral slope

Emerge, and resting on the moonlit
pales,

Freshen thy flowers, as in former
years,

With dew, or listen with enchanted
ears,

From the dark dingles, to the night-
ingales.

THE SCHOLAR · GIPSY

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental
 strife,
 Which, though it gives no bliss, yet
 spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own
 fair life,
 Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
 Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd
 thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shift-
 ing made:
And then thy glad perennial youth
 would fade,
 Fade, and grow old at last and die
 like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and
 smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the
 . sea,
 Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
 The fringes of a southward-facing
 brow
 Among the Ægean isles:
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
 Freighted with amber grapes, and
 Chian wine,

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd
in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient
home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the
waves;
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out
more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the
gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent
sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs,
through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians
come;
And on the beach undid his corded
bales.

The Forsaken Merman



Come, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shorewards blow;
Now the salt tides seawards flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray,
Children dear, let us away.
This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.
Call once yet.
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear:
Children's voices, wild with pain.
Surely she will come again.
Call her once and come away.
This way, this way.
"Mother dear, we cannot stay."
The wild white horses foam and fret.
Margaret! Margaret!

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Come, dear children, come away down.

Call no more.

One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little gray church on the windy
shore.

Then come down.

She will not come though you call all
day.

Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the
swell

The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;
Where the salt weed sways in the stream;
Where the sea-beasts ranged all round
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye.

When did music come this way?

Children dear, was it yesterday?

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of
the sea,

And the youngest sate on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended
it well,

When down swung the sound of the far-
off bell.

She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear
green sea.

She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk
pray

In the little gray church on the shore to-
day.

'T will be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here
with thee."

I said; "Go up, dear heart, through the
waves.

Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind
sea-caves."

She smiled, she went up through the
surf in the bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?

"The sea grows stormy, the little ones
moan.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Long prayers," I said, "in the world they
say.

Come," I said, and we rose through the
surf in the bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-
wall'd town.

Through the narrow paved streets, where
all was still,

To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk
at their prayers,

But we stood without in the cold blowing
airs.

We climb'd on the graves, on the stones,
worn with rains,

And we gaz'd up the aisle through the
small leaded panes.

She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are
here.

Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone.
The sea grows stormy, the little ones
moan."

But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.

Loud prays the priest; shut stands the
door.

Come away, children, call no more.

Come away, come down, call no more.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Down, down, down.

Down to the depths of the sea.

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.

Hark, what she sings; "O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child
with its toy;

For the priest, and the bell, and the holy
well;

For the wheel where I spun,

And the blessed light of the sun."

And so she sings her fill,

Singing most joyfully,

Till the shuttle falls from her hand,

And the whizzing wheel stands still.

She steals to the window, and looks at the
sand;

And over the sand at the sea;

And her eyes are set in a stare;

And anon there breaks a sigh,

And anon there drops a tear,

From a sorrow-clouded eye,

And a heart sorrow-laden,

A long, long sigh.

From the cold strange eyes of a little Mer-
maiden,

And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.

Come children, come down.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

The salt tide rolls seaward;
Lights shine in the town:
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing, "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she.
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight;
When soft the winds blow;
When clear falls the moonlight;
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom;
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom:
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie;
Over banks of bright sea-weed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hillside—

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

And then come back down.
Singing, "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she.
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

Sohrab and Rustum



AN EPISODE

And the first gray of morning fill'd the
east,

And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged
in sleep:

Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the gray dawn stole into his
tent,

He rose, and clad himself, and girt his
sword,

And took his horseman's cloak, and left
his tent,

And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's
tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he
pass'd, which stood

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Clustering like bee-hives on the low, flat
strand

Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snow in high
Pamere:

Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er
that low strand,

And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where
first a boat,

Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes
the land.

The men of former times had crown'd the
top

With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and
now

The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were
spread.

And Sohrab came there, and went in, and
stood

Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his
bed

Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his
arms.

And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the
step

Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's
sleep;

SOHRAB. AND RUSTUM

And he rose quickly on one arm, and
said:—

“Who art thou? for it is not yet clear
dawn.

Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and
said:—

“Thou know’st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army march’d;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan
first

I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
I have still serv’d Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy’s years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know’st, that, while I still
bear on

The conquering Tartar ensigns through
the world,

And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
Rustum, my father; who, I hoped, should
greet,

Should one day greet, upon some well-
fought field

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what
I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian
lords

To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no
kin.

Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names
are sunk:

But of a single combat Fame speaks
clear."

He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the
hand

Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and
said:—

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar
chiefs,

And share the battle's common chance
with us

Who love thee, but must press for ever
first,

In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?

Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

To seek out Rustum—seek him not through
fight:

Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!

But far hence seek him, for he is not here.

For now it is not as when I was young,

When Rustum was in front of every fray:

But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,

In Seistan, with Zal, his father old;

Whether that his own mighty strength at
last

Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;

Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart
forebodes

Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well,
though lost

To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in
peace

To seek thy father, not seek single fights

In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub

From ravening? and who govern Rus-
tum's son?

Go: I will grant thee what thy heart
desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand,
and left

His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he
lay,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and
he took

In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he placed his sheep-skin
cap,

Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-
Kul:

And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and
call'd

His herald to his side, and went abroad.
The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd
the fog

From the broad Oxus and the glittering
sands:

And from their tents the Tartar horsemen
filed

Into the open plain, so Haman bade;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse,
they stream'd:

As when, some gray November morn, the
files,

In marching order spread, of long-neck'd
cranes,

Stream over Casbin, and the southern
slopes

Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, south-
ward bound

For the warm Persian sea-board: so they
stream'd.

The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's
guard,

First with black sheep-skin caps and with
long spears;

Large men, large steeds; who from Bo-
khara come

And Khiva, and ferment the milk of
mares.

Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of
the south,

The Turkas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian
sands;

Light men, and on light steeds, who only
drink

The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.

And then a swarm of wandering horse,
who came

From far, and a more doubtful service
own'd;

The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder
hordes

Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern
waste,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes
who stray

Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kir-
ghizzes,

Who come on shaggy ponies from Pa-
mere.

These all filed out from camp into the
plain.

And on the other side the Persians form'd:
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they
seem'd,

The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnished
steel.

But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the
front,

And with his staff kept back the foremost
ranks.

And when Ferood, who led the Persians,
saw

That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he
came,

And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them
where they stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and
said:—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

“Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars,
hear!

Let there be truce between the hosts to-
day.

But choose a champion from the Persian
lords

To fight our champion Sohrab, man to
man.”

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for
joy—

So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa
said,

A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons
ran

Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom
they loved.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of
milk snow,

Winding so high, that, as they mount,
they pass

Long flocks of travelling birds dead on
the snow,

Choked by the air, and scarce can they
themselves

Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd
mulberries—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

In single file they move, and stop their
breath,

For fear they should dislodge the o'er-
hanging snows—

So ' the pale Persians held their breath
with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came
up

To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King:
These came and counsell'd; and then Gu-
durz said:—

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their chal-
lenge up.

Yet champion have we none to match
this youth.

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young
man's name.

Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their
challenge up.”

So spake he: and Ferood stood forth
and said:—

“ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and
strode
Back through the opening squadrons to
his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz
ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind,
and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering
gay,
Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the
midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd
around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and
found
Rustum: his morning meal was done, but
still
The table stood beside him, charged with
food;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of
bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum
sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and
stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him
stand;

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd
the bird,

And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and
said:—

“Welcome! these eyes could see no
better sight.

What news? but sit down first and eat
and drink.”

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and
said:—

“Not now: a time will come to eat and
drink,

But not to-day; to-day has other needs.

The armies are drawn out, and stand at
gaze:

For from the Tartars is a challenge
brought

To pick a champion from the Persian lords

To fight their champion—and thou know'st
his name—

Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.

O Rustum, like thy might is this young
man's!

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's
heart.

And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,

Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to
thee.

Come down and help us, Rustum, or we
lose.”

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—

“Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
Am older: if the young are weak, the
King

Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai
Khosroo,

Himself is young, and honours younger
men,

And lets the aged moulder to their graves.

Rustum he loves no more, but loves the
young—

The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts,
not I.

For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?

For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I
have,

A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his
herds,

And he has none to guard his weak old
age.

There would I go, and hang my armour
up,

And with my great name fence that weak
old man,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's
fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless
kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw
sword no more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz
made reply:—

"What then, O Rustum, will men say to
this,

When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and
seeks

Thee most of all, and thou, whom most
he seeks,

Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men
should say,

*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his
fame,*

And shuns to peril it with younger men."

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made
reply:—

"O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such
words?

Thou knowest better words than this to
say.

What is one more, one less, obscure or
famed,

Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?

Are not they mortal, am not I myself?

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

But who for men of nought would do
great deeds?

Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards
his fame.

But I will fight unknown, and in plain
arms;

Let not men say of Rustum, he was
match'd

In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz
turn'd, and ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear
and joy,

Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum
came.

But Rustum strode to his tent door, and
call'd

His followers in, and bade them bring
his arms,

And clad himself in steel: the arms he
chose

Were plain, and on his shield was no
device,

Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And from the fluted spine atop a plume
Of horse-hair waved, a scarlet horse-hair
plume.

So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his
horse,

Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,

‘SOHRAB AND RUSTUM’

Ruksh, whose renown was noised through
all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him
home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty
crest;
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd
green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground
were work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which
hunters know;
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and
cross'd
The camp, and to the Persian host ap-
pear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with
shouts
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he
was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on
shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at
night,
Having made up his tale of precious
pearls,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum
came.

And Rustum to the Persian front ad-
vanced,
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and
came.

And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
Down through the middle of a rich man's
corn,

And on each side are squares of standing
corn,

And in the midst a stubble, short and
bare;

So on each side were squares of men,
with spears

Bristling, and in the midst, the open
sand.

And Rustum came upon the sand, and
cast

His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and
saw

Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he
came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's
morn,

Eyes through her silken curtains the poor
drudge

Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes
her fire—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd win-
dow panes—

And wonders how she lives, and what
the thoughts

Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum
eyed

The unknown adventurous Youth, who
from afar

Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs: long he per-
used

His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark,
and straight,

Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit
turf,

By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's
sound—

So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and
said:—

“O thou young man, the air of Heaven
is soft,

And warm and pleasant; but the grave is
cold.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Heaven's air is better than the cold dead
grave.

Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many..a
field

Of blood, and I have fought with many
a foe:

Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on
death?

Be govern'd: quit the Tartar host, and
come

To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as
thou."

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his
voice,

The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Has builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that
head,

Streak'd with its first gray hairs: hope
fill'd his soul;

And he ran forwards and embraced his
knees,

And clasp'd his hand within his own and
said:—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

"Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!

Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?"

But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,

And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:

"Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.

False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,

A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast day, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
'I challenged once, when the two armies
camp'd

Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank; only Rustum dared: then he
and I

Changed gifts, and went on equal terms
away'.

So will he speak, perhaps, while men
applaud.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed
through me."

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake
aloud:—

"Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question
thus

Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast
call'd

By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt,
or yield.

Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst
fight?

Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face
and flee.

For well I know, that did great Rustum
stand

Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting
more.

But being what I am, I tell thee this;
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and
yield;

Or else thy bones shall strew this sand,
till winds

Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer
floods,

Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his
feet —

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

"Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright
me so.

I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum
stand

Here on this field, there were no fighting
then.

But Rustum is far hence, and we stand
here.

Begin: thou art more vast, more dread
than I,

And thou art proved, I know, and I am
young—

But yet Success sways with the breath of
Heaven.

And though thou thinkest that thou
knowest sure

Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely
know.

For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to
fall.

And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of
death,

We know not, and no search will make
us know:

Only the event will teach us in this hour."

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not,
but hurl'd
His spear: down from the shoulder, down
it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it
come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the
spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the
sand,
Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab
threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield:
sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the
spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none
but he
Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was,
and huge,
Still rough; like those which men in tree-
less plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded
rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-
time
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And strewn the channels with torn boughs;
so huge

The club which Rustum lifted now, and
struck

One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club
came

Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.

And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and
fell

To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd
the sand:

And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd
his sword,

And pierced the mighty Rustum while he
lay

Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with
sand:

But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared
his sword,

But courteously drew back, and spoke,
and said:—

“Thou strik'st too hard: that club of
thine will float

Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.

But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth
am I:

No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my
soul.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Thou say'st thou art not Rustum: be it
so.

Who art thou then, that canst so touch
my soul?

Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
Have waded foremost in their bloody
waves,

And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of
the heart?

O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
Come, plant we here in earth our angry
spears,

And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like
friends,

And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's
deeds.

There are enough foes in the Persian host
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel
no pang;

Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom
thou

Mayst fight; fight them, when they con-
front thy spear.

But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and
me!"

He ceased: but while he spake, Rustum
had risen,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And stood erect, trembling with rage: his
club

He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right
hand

Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn
Star,

The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glitter-
ing arms.

His breast heaved; his lips foam'd; and
twice his voice

Was choked with rage: at last these words
broke way:—

“Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with
thy hands!

Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet
words!

Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no
more!

Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art
wont to dance;

But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and
wine!

Remember all thy valour: try thy feints
And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Because thou hast shamed me before both
the hosts

With thy light skipping tricks, and thy
girl's wiles."

He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his
taunts,

And he too drew his sword: at once they
rush'd

Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the
clouds,

One from the east, one from the west:
their shields

Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy wood-cutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such
blows

Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars
took part

In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the
sun

Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the
plain,

And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and
they alone;

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

For both the onlooking hosts on either
hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was
pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with blood-
shot eyes
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck
the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-
spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach
the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry
groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rus-
tum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all
the crest
He shore away, and that proud horse-hair
plume,
Never till now defiled, sunk to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then
the gloom
Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh,
the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his
side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand:—
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked
for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but
rush'd on,
And struck again; and again Rustum
bow'd
His head; but this time all the blade, like
glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remained alone.
Then Rustum raised his head: his dreadful
eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menac-
ing spear,
And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that
shout,
And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one
step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the ad-
vancing Form:
And then he stood bewilder'd; and he
dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierced
his side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sank to
the ground.

‘SOHRAB’ AND ‘RUSTUM’

And then the gloom dispersed, and the
wind fell,

And the bright sun broke forth, and melted
all

The cloud; and the two armies saw the
pair;

Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum be-
gan:—

“Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to
kill

A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.

Or else that the great Rustum would come
down

Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would
move

His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would

praise

Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy
fame,

To glad thy father in his weak old age.

Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown
man!

Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.”

And with a fearless mien Sohrab re-
plied:—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

“Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt
is vain.

Thou dost not slay me, proud and boast-
ful man!

No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as
thou,

And I were he who till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing
there.

But that beloved name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in
thee,

Which troubles all my heart, and made
my shield

Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd
foe.

And now thou boastest, and insult'st my
fate.

But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to
hear!

The mighty Rustum shall avenge my
death!

My father, whom I seek through all the
world,

He shall avenge my death, and punish
thee!”

As when some hunter in the spring hath
found

A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging
back

From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he
checks

His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows
his loss—

So Rustum knew not his own loss, but
stood

Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he
said:—

“What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab re-
plied:—

“Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear, •

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries
long,

Somewhere, I know not where, but far
from here;

And pierce him like a stab, and make him
leap

To arms, and cry for vengeance upon
thee.

Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son
What will that grief, what will that ven-
geance be!

Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King, her father, who grows
gray

With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is
done.

But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke; and as he ceased he wept
aloud,

Thinking of her he left, and his own death.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged
in thought.

Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names
he knew;

For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in
arms;

And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's
son;

Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in
thought;

And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon: tears gathered in his
eyes;

For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge
descries

A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum
saw

His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her
bloom;

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And that old King, her father, who loved
well

His wandering guest, and gave him his
fair child

With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-
time—

The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful
hills

In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the
scythe

Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its
bed,

And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab
lay,

Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and
said:—

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well
have loved!

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rus-
tum's son.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

*For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams
of us—*

*Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor
war."*

*But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for
now*

*The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew
fierce,*

*And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn
foe—*

And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

*"Man, who art thou who dost deny my
words?*

*Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from
mine.*

*I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother
gave,*

*That she might prick it on the babe she
bore."*

*He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's
checks;*

*And his knees totter'd, and he smote his
hand*

Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

That the hard iron corselet clank'd aloud:
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could
not lie.

If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's
son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab
loosed

His belt, and near the shoulder bared his
arm,

And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain
vase,

An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes,
the lamp

Lights up his studious forehead and thin
hands:—

So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's
seal.

It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd
Zal,

Rustum's great father, whom they left to
die,

A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd,
and loved—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful
eyes,

And then he touch'd it with his hand and
said:—

“How say'st thou? Is that sign the
proper sign

Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?”

He spoke: but Rustum gazed, and gazed,
and stood

Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp
cry—

O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice choked
there.

And then a dark cloud pass'd before his
eyes,

And his head swam, and he sank down
to earth.

But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and
cast

His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his
lips,

And with fond faltering fingers stroked his
cheeks,

Trying to call him back to life: and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his
eyes,

And they stood wide with horror; and he
seized

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

In both his hands the dust which lay
 around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd
 his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glitter-
 ing arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his
 breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd
 his sword
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his
 hands,
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and
 said:—
 “Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written
 down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's uncon-
 scious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke
 too,
I know it: but Fate trod those prompt-
 ings down
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engaged
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's
 spear.
But let us speak no more of this: I find
My father; let me feel that I have found.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my
cheeks,

And wash them with thy tears, and say,
‘My Son!’

Quick! quick! for number’d are my sands
of life,

And swift; for like the lightning to this
field

I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing
wind.

But it was writ in Heaven that this should
be.”

So said he: and his voice releas’d the
heart

Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he
cast

*His arms round his son's neck, and wept
aloud,*

And kiss’d him. And awe fell on both the
hosts

When they saw Rustum’s grief: and Ruksh,
the horse,

With his head bowing to the ground, and
mane

Sweeping the dust, came near, and in
mute woe

First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if enquiring what their grief

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Might mean; and from his dark, compas-
sionate eyes

The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked
the sand.

But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and
said:—

“Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O
Ruksh, thy feet

Should then have rotted, on thy nimble
joints,

When first they bore thy Master to this
field.”

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and
said:—

“Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past
days,

My mother told me of thee, thou brave
Steed!

My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and
thee.

Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's
home.

And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the
Lake

Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Has often stroked thy neck, and given
thee food,

Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said—' O Ruksh! bear Rustum well! '—
but I

Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd
face,

Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund
stream:

But lodg'd among my father's foes, and
seen

Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only
drunk

The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their
sheep,

The northern Sir; and this great Oxus
stream—

The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die." ②

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum re-
plied:—

"Oh that its waves were flowing over
me!

Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab
replied:—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

“Desire not that, my father; thou must live.

For some are born to do great deeds, and live,

As some are born to be obscured, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age.

Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come: thou seest this great host of men

Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:

Let me entreat for them: what have they done?

They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.

Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,

But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for .. me,

Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.

And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:

That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance
kill—*

And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum
replied:—

"Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my
son,

So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with
me.

And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for
thee,

With the snow-headed Zal, and all my
friends.

And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:

And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.

And I will spare thy host: yea, let him go:

Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.

What should I do with slaying any more?

For would that all whom I have ever slain

Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,

And they who were called champions in
their time,

And through whose death I won that fame
I have;

And I were nothing but a common man,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

A poor, mean soldier, and without renown;
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my
Son!

Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of
thine,

Not thou of mine; and I might die, not
thou;

And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not
thine;

And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine
end.*—

But now in blood and battles was my
youth,

And full of blood and battles is my age;
And I shall never end this life of blood.”

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—

“A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not
now;

Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted
Ship,

Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.”

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And Rustum gazed on Sohrab's face, and
said:—

“Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that
sea!

Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.”

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him,
and took

The spear, and drew it from his side, and
eased

His wound's imperious anguish: but the
blood

Came welling from the open gash, and
life

Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold
white side

The crimson torrent pour'd, dim now, and
soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets

Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,

By romping children, whom their nurses
call

From the hot fields at noon: his head
droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack; motionless, white,
he lay—

White, with eyes closed; only when heavy
gasps,

Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all
his frame,

Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from
his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it
left,
And youth and bloom, and this delightful
world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
And the great Rustum drew his horse-
man's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead
son.

As those black granite pillars, once high
rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights
of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain
side—

So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn
waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole
pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with
night,

Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

Both armies moved to camp, and took
their meal:

The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward; the Tartars by the river marge:
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian
waste,

Under the solitary moon: he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large: then
sands begin

To hem his watery march, and dam his
streams,

And split his currents; that for many a
league

The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sands and matted rushy
isles—

Oxus forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and
wide

His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-
bathed stars

Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

Saint Brandan



Saint Brandan sails the Northern Main;
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again:
So late!—such storms!—The Saint is
mad!

He heard across the howling seas,
Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;
He saw on spray-swept Hebrides,
Twinkle the monastery lights.

But north, still north, Saint Brandan
steer'd:
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,
The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night;
Stars shone after a day of storm)—
He sees float near an iceberg white,
And on it—Christ!—a living form!

SAINT, BRANDAN

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that black and tufted fell—
It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly?
The traitor Judas, out of Hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly: "Wait!"
By high permission I am here.

"One moment wait, thou holy Man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew:
My name is under all men's ban:
Ah, tell them of my respite too!

"Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night—
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

"I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagu'd by Heavenly
power,
An Angel touch mine arm, and say:
Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!

"'Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?' I said.
*The Leper recollect, said he,
Who ask'd the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.*

SAINT BRANDAN

“ Then I remember’d how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust, with burning heat;

“ And in the street a leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old;
Sand rak’d his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fever’d him five-fold.

“ He gazed upon me as I pass’d,
And murmur’d: *Help me, or I die!*—
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eas’d, and hurried by.

“ O Brandan! Think, what grace divine,
What blessing must full goodness shower,
When semblance of it faint, like mine,
Hath such inalienable power!

“ Well-fed, well-cloth’d, well-friended, I
Did that chance act of good, that one!
Then went my way to kill and lie—
Forgot my deed as soon as done.

“ That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of Mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

SAINT BRANDAN

"Once every year, when carols wake
On earth, the Christmas-night's repose,
Arising from the Sinners' lake,
I journey to these healing snows. .

"I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest
That Joppan leper's ease was pain!"——

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bow'd his head, he breath'd a prayer;
When he look'd up—tenantless lies
The iceberg in the frosty air!

The Sick King in Bokhara

Hussein

O most just Vizier, send away
The cloth-merchants, and let them be,
Them and their dues, this day: the King
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

The Vizier

O merchants, tarry yet a day
Here in Bokhara: but at noon
To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay
Each fortieth web of cloth to me,
As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King.
Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,
Ferdusi's, and the others', lead.
How is it with my lord?

Hussein

Alone
Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,
O Vizier, without lying down,

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

In the great window of the gate,
Looking into the Registràn :
Where through the sellers' booths the
 slaves
Are this way bringing the dead man.
O Vizier, here is the King's door.

The King

O Vizier, I may bury him?

The Vizier

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick
These many days, and heard no thing,
(For Allah shut my ears and mind)
Not even what thou dost, O King.
Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,
Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste
To speak in order what hath chanced.

The King

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

Hussein

Three days since, at the time of prayer,
A certain Mbollah, with his robe
All rent, and dust upon his hair,
Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and
 push'd

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

The golden mace-bearers aside,
And fell at the King's feet, and cried,

"Justice, O King, and on myself!
On this great sinner, who hath broke
The law, and by the law must die!
Vengeance, O King!"

But the King spoke:

"What fool is this, that hurts our ears
With folly? or what drunken slave?
My guards, what, prick him with your
spears!

Prick me the fellow from the path!"
As the King said, so was it done,
And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King
Went forth again, the holy book
Carried before him, as is right,
And through the square his path he took;

My man comes running, fleck'd with blood
From yesterday, and falling down
Cries out most earnestly; "O King,
My lord, O King, do right, I pray!"

"How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern
If I speak folly? but a king,

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

Whether a thing be great or small,
Like Allah, hears and judges all.

“Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st,
how fierce
In these last days the sun hath burn'd:
That the green water in the tanks
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd:
And the canal, that from the stream
Of Samarcand is brought this way
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

“Now I at nightfall had gone forth
Alone, and in a darksome place
Under some mulberry trees I found
A little pool: and in brief space
With all the water that was there
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home
Unseen: and having drink to spare,
I hid the can behind the door,
And went up on the roof to sleep.

“But in the night, which was with wind
And burning dust, again I creep
Down, having fever, for a drink.

“Now meanwhile had my brethren found
The water-pitcher, where it stood
Behind the door upon the ground,
And call'd my mother: and they all,

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

As they were thirsty, and the night
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there,
That they sate with it, in my sight,
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

Now mark! I, being fever'd, sick,
(Most unblest also) at that sight
Brake forth and curs'd them—dost thou
hear?—
One was my mother ——— Now, do
right!”

But my lord mused a space, and said:
“Send him away, Sirs, and make on.
It is some madman,” the King said:
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow at the self-same hour
In the King's path, behold, the man,
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd: he stood
Right opposite, and thus began,

Frowning grim down:—“Thou wicked
King,
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give
ear!
What, must I howl in the next world,
Because thou wilt not listen here?

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

My lord had covered up his face:
But when one told him, "He is dead,"
Turning him quickly to go in,
"Bring thou to me his corpse," he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,
I hear the bearers on the stair.
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in?
—Ho! enter ye who tarry there!

The Visier

O King, in this I praise thee not.
Now must I call thy grief not wise.
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,
To find such favour in thine eyes?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.
It were not meet the balance swerv'd,
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,
Why for no cause make sad thy face?
Lo, I am old: three kings, ere thee,
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,
Could bear the burden of his years,
If he for strangers pain'd his heart
Not less than those who merit tears?

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child;
And grievous is the grief for these:
This pain alone, which *must* be borne,
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own
One man is not well made to bear.
Besides, to each are his own friends,
To mourn with him, and show him care.

Look, this is but one single place,
Though it be great: all the earth round,
If a man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be
found.

Upon the northern frontier, where
The watchers of two armies stand
Near one another, many a man,
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave:
They snatch also, towards Mervè,
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,
And up from thence to Urghendjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,
Eat not the fruit of their own hands:
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,
To that man's mind, who understands.

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

The kaffirs also (whom God curse!)
Vex one another, night and day:
There are the lepers, and all sick:
There are the poor, who faint away.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.
Wilt thou have pity on all these?
No, nor on this dead dog, O King!

The King

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.
Clear in these things I cannot see.
My head is burning; and a heat
Is in my skin, which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,
Unto a rule more strong than theirs
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes
Gazing up hither, the poor man,
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,
Below there, in the Registràn,

Says, "Happy he, who lodges there!
With silken raiment, store of rice,
And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,
Grape syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

"With cherries served in drifts of snow."
In vain hath a king power to build
Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques;
And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, brought from far;
With cisterns for the winter rain;
And in the desert, spacious inns
In divers places;—if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,
If his will be not satisfied:
And that it be not, from all time
The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man!
Thou wert athirst; and didst not see,
That, though we snatch what we desire,
We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,
And rooms of treasures, not a few.
But I am sick, nor heed I these:
And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,
When I am dead, will soon grow still.
So have I neither joy, nor fame.
But what I can do, that I will.

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

I have a fretted brick-work tomb
Upon a hill on the right hand,
Hard by a close of apricots,
Upon the road of Samarcand.

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear
This man my pity could not save:
And, tearing up the marble flags,
There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.
Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb.
Then say; "He was not wholly vile,
Because a king shall bury him."

The New Sirens

A PALINODE

In the cedar shadow sleeping,
Where cool grass and fragrant glooms
Oft at noon had lur'd me, creeping
From your darken'd palace-rooms:
I, who in your train at morning
Stroll'd and sang with joyful mind,
Heard, at evening, sounds of warning;
Heard the hoarse boughs labour in the
wind.

Who are they, O pensive Graces,
—For I dream'd they wore your forms—
Who on shores and sea-wash'd places
Scoop the shelves and fret the storms?
Who, when ships are that way tending,
Troop across the flushing sands,
To all reefs and narrows wending,
With blown tresses, and with beckoning
hands?

THE NEW SIRENS

Yet I see, the howling levels
Of the deep are not your lair;
And your tragic-vaunted revels
Are less lonely than they were.
In a Tyrian galley steering
From the golden springs of 'dawn,
Troops, like Eastern Kings appearing,
Stream all day through your enchanted
lawn.

And we too, from upland valleys,
Where some Muse with half-curv'd frown,
Leans her ear to your mad sallies
Which the charm'd winds never drown;
By faint music guided, ranging
The scarr'd glens, we wander'd on:
Left our awful laurels hanging,
And came heap'd with myrtles to your
throne.

From the dragon-warrior'd fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are:
From the watchers on the mountains,
And the bright and morning star:
We are exiles, we are falling,
We have lost them at your call,
O ye false ones, at your calling
Seeking ceiled chambers and a palace-hall.

THE NEW SIRENS

Are the accents of your luring
More melodious than of yore?
Are those frail forms more enduring
Than the charms Ulysses bore?
That we sought you with rejoicings
Till at evening we descry
At a pause of Siren voicings
These vexed branches and this howling sky?

Oh! your pardon. The uncouthness
Of that primal age is gone:
And the skin of dazzling smoothness
Screens not now a heart of stone.
Love has flush'd those cruel faces;
And those slacken'd arms forego
The delight of fierce embraces:
And those whitening bone-mounds do not
grow.

"Come," you say; "the large appearance
Of man's labour is but vain:
And we plead as firm adherence
Due to pleasure as to pain."
Pointing to some world-worn creatures,
"Come," you murmur with a sigh:
"Ah! we own diviner features,
Loftier bearing, and a prouder eye.

THE NEW SIREAS

"Come" you say, "the hours were dreary:
Life is long, and will not fade:
Time is lame, and we grow weary
In this slumbrous cedarn shade.
Round our hearts, with long caresses,
With low sighs hath Silence stole;
And her load of streaming tresses
Fell, like Ossa, on the aery soul.

"Come" you say, "the Soul is fainting
Till she search, and learn her own;
And the wisdom of man's painting
Leaves her riddle half unknown.
Come" you say, "the brain is seeking,
While the princely heart is dead:
Yet this glean'd, when Gods were speak-
ing,
Rarer secrets than the toiling head.

"Come" you say, "opinion trembles,
Judgment shifts, convictions go:
Life dries up, the heart dissembles:
Only, what we feel, we know.
Hath your wisdom known emotions?
Will it weep our burning tears?
Hath it drunk of our love-potions
Crowning moments with the weight of
years?"

THE NEW SIRENS

I am dumb. Alas! too soon, all
Man's grave reasons disappear:
Yet, I think, at God's tribunal
Some large answer you shall hear.
But, for me, my thoughts are straying
Where at sunrise, through your vines,
On these lawns I saw you playing,
Hanging garlands on the odorous pines:

When your showering locks enwound
you,
And your heavenly eyes shone through:
When the pine-boughs yielded round you,
And your brows were starr'd with dew:
And immortal forms to meet you
Down the statued alleys came:
And through golden horns, to greet you,
Blew such music as a God may frame.

Yes—I muse:—And, if the dawning
Into daylight never grew—
If the glistening wings of morning
On the dry noon shook their dew—
If the fits of joy were longer—
Or the day were sooner done—
Or, perhaps, if Hope were stronger—
No weak nursling of an earthly sun . . .
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
Dusk the hall with yew!

THE NEW SIRENS

For a bound was set to meetings,
And the sombre day dragg'd on:
And the burst of joyful greetings,
And the joyful dawn, were gone:
For the eye grows fill'd with gazing,
And on raptures follow calms:—
And those warm locks men were praising
Droop'd, unbraided, on your listless arms.

Storms unsmooth'd your folded valleys,
And made all your cedars frown.
Leaves are whirling in the alleys
Which your lovers wander'd down:
—Sitting cheerless in your bowers,
The hands propping the sunk head,
Do they gall you, the long hours?
And the hungry thought, that must be fed?

Is the pleasure that is tasted
Patient of a long review?
Will the fire joy hath wasted,
Mus'd on, warm the heart anew?
—Or, are those old thoughts returning,
Guests the dull sense never knew,
Stars, set deep, yet inly burning,
Germs, your untrimm'd Passion overgrew?

Once, like me, you took your station,
Watchers for a purer fire:

THE NEW SIRENS

But you droop'd in expectation,
And you wearied in desire.
When the first rose flush was steeping
All the frore peak's awful crown,
Shepherds say, they found you sleeping
In some windless valley, further down.

Then you wept, and slowly raising
Your doz'd eyelids, sought again,
Half in doubt, they say, and gazing
Sadly back, the seats of men.
Snatch'd an earthly inspiration
From some transient human Sun,
And proclaimed your vain ovation
For the mimic raptures you had won.
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
Dusk the hall with yew!

With a sad, majestic motion—
With a stately, slow surprise—
From their earthward-bound devotion
Lifting up your languid eyes:
Would you freeze my louder boldness,
Dumbly smiling as you go?
One faint frown of distant coldness
Flitting fast across each marble brow?

Do I brighten at your sorrow
O sweet Pleaders? doth my lot

THE NEW SIRENS

Find assurance in to-morrow
Of one joy, which you have not?
O, speak once! and let my sadness,
And this sobbing, Phrygian strain,
Sham'd and baffled by your gladness,
Blame the music of your feasts in vain.

Scent, and song, and light, and flowers—
Gust on gust, the hoarse winds blow.
Come, bind up those ringlet showers!
Roses for that dreaming brow!
Come, once more that ancient lightness,
Glancing feet, and eager eyes!
Let your broad lamps flash the brightness
Which the sorrow-stricken day denies!

Through black depths of serried shadows,
Up cold aisles of buried glade;
In the mist of river-meadows
Where the looming kine are laid;
From your dazzled windows streaming,
From your humming festal room,
Deep and far, a broken gleaming
Reels and shivers on the ruffled gloom.

Where I stand, the grass is glowing;
Doubtless you are passing fair: , ,

THE NEW SIRENS

But I hear the north wind blowing;
And I feel the cold night-air.
Can I look on your sweet faces,
And your proud heads backward thrown,
From this dusk of leaf-strewn places,
With the dumb woods and the night alone?

Yet, indeed, this flux of guesses—
Mad delight, and frozen calms—
Mirth to-day and vine-bound tresses,
And to-morrow—folded palms—
Is this all? this balanc'd measure?
Could life run no easier way?
Happy, at the noon of pleasure,
Passive at the midnight of dismay?

But, indeed, this proud possession—
This far-reaching, magic chain,
Linking in a mad succession
Fits of joy and fits of pain:
Have you seen it at the closing?
Have you track'd its clouded ways?
Can your eyes, while fools are dozing,
Drop, with mine, adown life's latter days?

When a dreary light is wading
Through this waste of sunless greens—
When the flashing lights are fading
On the peerless cheek of queens—

THE NEW SIRENS

When the mean shall no more sorrow,
And the proudest no more smile—
While the dawning of the morrow
Widens slowly westward all that while?

Then, when change itself is over,
When the slow tide sets one way,
Shall you find the radiant lover,
Even by moments, of to-day?
The eye wanders, faith is failing:
O, loose hands, and let it be!
Proudly, like a king bewailing,
O, let fall one tear, and set us free!

All true speech and large avowal
Which the jealous soul concedes:
All man's heart—which brooks bestowal:
All frank faith—which passion breeds:
These we had, and we gave truly:
Doubt not, what we had, we gave:
False we were not, not unruly:
Lodgers in the forest and the cave.

Long we wander'd with you, feeding
Our sad souls on your replies:
In a wistful silence reading
All the meaning of your eyes:

THE NEW SIRENS

By moss-border'd statues sitting,
By well-heads, in summer days.
But we turn, our eyes are flitting.
See, the white east, and the morning rays!

And you too, O worshipp'd Graces,
Sylvan Gods of this fair shade!
Is there doubt on divine faces?
Are the happy Gods dismay'd?
Can men worship the wan features,
The sunk eyes, the wailing tone,
Of unspher'd, discrowned creatures,
Souls as little godlike as their own?

Come, loose hands! The winged fleet-
ness
Of immortal feet is gone.
And your scents have shed their sweet-
ness,
And your flowers are overblown.
And your jewell'd gauds surrender
Half their glories to the day:
Freely did they flash their splendour,
Freely gave it—but it dies away.

In the pines the thrush is waking—
Lo, yon orient hill in flames:
Scores of true love-knots are breaking
At divorce which it proclaims.

THE NEW SIRENS

When the lamps are pal'd at morning,
Heart quits heart, and hand quits hand.
—Cold in that unlovely dawning,
Loveless, rayless, joyless you shall stand.

Strew no more red roses, maidens,
Leave the lilies in their dew:
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens!
Dusk, O dusk the hall with yew!
—Shall I seek, that I may scorn her,
Her I lov'd at eventide?
Shall I ask, what faded mourner
Stands, at daybreak, weeping by my side?
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens!
Dusk the hall with yew!

The Voice

As the kindling glances,
Queen-like and clear,
Which the bright moon lances
From her tranquil sphere
At the sleepless waters
Of a lonely mere,
On the wild whirling waves, mournfully
mournfully,
Shiver and die:

As the tears of sorrow
Mothers have shed—
Prayers that to-morrow
Shall in vain be sped
When the flower they flow for
Lies frozen and dead—
Fall on the throbbing brow, fall on the
burning breast,
Bringing no rest:

Like bright waves that fall
With a lifelike motion
On the lifeless margin of the sparkling
Ocean:

THE VOICE

A wild rose climbing up a mould'ring
wall—

A gush of sunbeams through a ruin'd
hall—

Strains of glad music at a funeral:—

So sad, and with so wild a start

To this deep-sober'd heart,

So anxiously and painfully,

So drearily and doubtfully,

And oh, with such intolerable change

Of thought, such contrast strange,

O unforgotten Voice, thy whispers come,

Like wanderers from the world's ex-
tremity,

Unto their ancient home.

In vain, all, all in vain,

They beat upon mine ear again,

Those melancholy tones so sweet and
still.

Those lute-like tones which in long dis-
tant years

Did steal into mine ears :

Blew such a thrilling summons to my
will;

Yet could not shake it.

Drain'd all the life my full heart had to
spill;

Yet could not break it.

The Youth of Nature



Raised are the dripping oars—
Silent the boat: the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye.

Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely: a mortal is dead.
The spots which recall him survive,
For he lent a new life to these hills.
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
That border Ennerdale Lake,
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
The gleam of the "Evening Star"
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
But ruin'd and solemn and gray
The sheepfold of Michael survives,

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

And far to the south, the heath
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
By the favourite waters of Ruth.
These survive: yet not without pain,
Pain and dejection to-night,
Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
He look'd on the rushing decay
Of the times which had shelter'd his
youth:

Felt the dissolving throes
Of a social order he loved:
Outlived his brethren, his peers,
And, like the Theban seer,
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa.
Copais lay bright in the moon.
Helicon glass'd in the lake
Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks
Of Parnassus, snowily clear.
Thebes was behind him in flames,
And the clang of arms in his ear,
When his awe-struck captors led
The Theban seer to the spring.

Tiresias drank and died.
Nor did reviving Thebes
See such a prophet again.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

Well may we mourn, when the head
Of a sacred poet lies low
In an age which can rear them no more.
The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were
glad.

He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
Of his race is past on the earth;
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fills us with joy,
Or the Poet who sings you so well?
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,
Or the voice which reveals what you are?
Are ye, like daylight and sun,
Shared and rejoiced in by all?
Or are ye immersed in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world
Too deep for the most to discern?

Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage,
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

“They are here”—I heard, as men heard
In Mysian Ida the voice
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,
The murmur of Nature reply—
“Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,
They are here—they are set in the world—
They abide—and the finest of souls
Has not been thrill’d by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal, and live,
For they are the life of the world.

Will ye not learn it, and know,
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,
That the singer was less than his themes,
Life, and Emotion, and I?

“More than the singer are these.
Weak is the tremor of pain
That thrills in his mournfullest chord
To that which once ran through his soul.
Cold the elation of joy
In his gladdest, airiest song,
To that which of old in his youth
Fill’d him and made him divine.
Hardly his voice at its best
Gives us a sense of the awe,
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
Of the unlit gulf of himself.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

"Ye know not yourselves—and your
bards,

The clearest, the best, who have read
Most in themselves have beheld
Less than they left unreveal'd.

Ye express not yourselves—can ye make
With marble, with colour, with word

What charm'd you in others relive?

Can thy pencil, O Artist, restore

The figure, the bloom of thy love,

As she was in her morning of spring?

Canst thou paint the ineffable smile

Of her eyes as they rested on thine?

Can the image of life have the glow,

The motion of life itself?

"Yourselves and your fellows ye know
not—and me

The mateless, the one, will ye know?

Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell

Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,

My longing, my sadness, my joy?

Will ye claim for your great ones the gift

To have render'd the gleam of my skies,

To have echoed the moan of my seas,

Utter'd the voice of my hills?

When your great ones depart, will ye
say—

'All things have suffer'd a loss—
Nature is hid in their grave?'

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

“ Race after race, man after man,
Have dream'd that my secret was theirs,
Have thought that I lived but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.—
They are dust, they are changed, they
are gone.
I remain.”

The Youth of Man

We, O Nature, depart,
Thou survivest us: this,
This, I know, is the law.
Yes, but more than this,
Thou who seest us die
Seest us change while we live;
Seest our dreams one by one,
Seest our errors depart:
 Watchest us, Nature, throughout,
Mild and inscrutably calm.

Well for us that we change!
Well for us that the Power
Which in our morning prime,
Saw the mistakes of our youth,
Sweet, and forgiving, and good,
Sees the contrition of age!

Behold, O Nature, this pair!
See them to-night where they stand,
Not with the halo of youth
Crowning their brows with its light,

THE YOUTH OF MAN

Not with the sunshine of hope,
Not with the rapture of spring,
Which they had of old when they stood
Years ago at my side
In this self-same garden, and said;
"We are young, and the world is ours,
For man is the king of the world.
Fools that these mystics are
Who prate of Nature! but she
Has neither beauty, nor warmth,
Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.
But man has a thousand gifts,
And the generous dreamer invests
The senseless world with them all.
Nature is nothing! her charm
Lives in our eyes which can paint,
Lives in our hearts which can feel!"

Thou, O Nature, wert mute,
Mute as of old: days flew,
Days and years; and Time
With the ceaseless stroke of his wings
Brush'd off the bloom from their soul.
Clouded and dim grew their eye,
Languid their heart; for Youth
Quicken'd its pulses no more.
Slowly within the walls
Of an ever-narrowing world
They droop'd, they grew blind, they
grew old.

THE YOUTH OF MAN

Thee and their Youth in thee,
Nature, they saw no more.

Murmur of living!
Stir of existence!
Soul of the world!
Make, oh make yourselves felt
To the dying spirit of Youth.
Come, like the breath of the spring.
Leave not a human soul
To grow old in darkness and pain.
Only the living can feel you:
But leave us not while we live.

Here they stand to-night—
Here, where this gray balustrade
Crowns the still valley: behind
Is the castled house with its woods
Which shelter'd their childhood, the sun
On its ivied windows; a scent
From the gray-wall'd gardens, a breath
Of the fragrant stock and the pink
Perfumes the evening air.

Their children play on the lawns.
They stand and listen: they hear
The children's shouts, and, at times,
Faintly, the bark of a dog
From a distant farm in the hills:—
Nothing besides; in front
The wide, wide valley outspreads

THE YOUTH OF MAN

To the dim horizon, reposed
In the twilight, and bathed in dew,
 Corn-field and hamlet and copse
Darkening fast; but a light,
Far off, a glory of day,
Still plays on the city spires:
And there in the dusk by the walls,
With the gray mist marking its course
Through the silent flowery land,
On, to the plains, to the sea,
Floats the imperial Stream.

Well I know what they feel.
They gaze, and the evening wind
Plays on their faces: they gaze;
Airs from the Eden of Youth,
Awake and stir in their soul:
The past returns; they feel
What they are, alas! what they were.
They, not Nature, are changed.
Well I know what they feel.

Hush! for tears
Begin to steal to their eyes.
Hush! for fruit
Grows from such sorrow as theirs.

And they remember
With piercing untold anguish
The proud boasting of their youth.

THE YOUTH OF MAN

And they feel how Nature was fair.
And the mists of delusion,
And 'the scales of habit,'
Fall away from their eyes.
And they see, for a moment,
Stretching out, like the desert
In its weary, unprofitable length,
Their faded ignoble lives.

While the locks are yet brown on thy
head,
While the soul still looks through thine
eyes,
While the heart still pours
The mantling blood to thy cheek,
Sink, O Youth, in thy soul!
Yearn to the greatness of Nature!
Rally the good in the depths of thyself.

Progress



The Master stood upon the Mount, and
taught.

He saw a fire in his Disciples' eyes.

"The old Law", they said, "is wholly
come to nought;

Behold the new world rise!"

"Was it", the Lord then said, "with
scorn ye saw

The old Law observed by Scribes and
Pharisees?

I say unto you, see *ye* keep that Law
More faithfully than these.

"Too hasty heads for ordering worlds,
alas!

Think not that I to annul the Law have
will'd.

No jot, no tittle from the Law shall pass,
Till all shall be fulfill'd."

PROGRESS

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.
And what then shall be said to those to-day
Who cry aloud to lay the old world low
To clear the new world's way?

"Religious fervours! ardour misapplied!
Hence, hence," they cry, "ye do but keep
man blind!
But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
And lame the active mind."

Ah, from the old world let someone
answer give—
"Scorn ye this world, their tears, their
inward cares?
I say unto you, see that *your* souls live
A deeper life than theirs.

"Say ye,—The spirit of man has found
new roads;
And we must leave the old faiths, and
walk therein?—
Quench then the altar fires of your old
Gods!
Quench not the fire within!

"Bright else, and fast, the stream of life
may roll,
And no man may the other's hurt behold.

PROGRESS

Yet each will have one anguish—his own
soul
Which perishes of cold.”

Here let that voice make end: then, let a
strain
From a far lonelier distance, like the wind
Be heard, floating through heaven, and
fill again
These men’s profoundest mind—

“Children of men! the unseen Power,
whose eye
Ever accompanies the march of man,
Hath without pain seen *no* religion die,
Since first the world began.

“That man must still to some new
worship press
Hath in His eye ever but served to show
The depth of that consuming restlessness
Which makes man’s greatest woe.

“Which has not taught weak wills how
much they can?
Which has not fall’n on the dry heart like
rain?
Which has not cried to sunk self-weary
man,
‘Thou must be born again’?

PROGRESS

"Children of men! not that your age
excel

In pride of life the ages of your sires;

But that you too feel deeply, bear fruit
well,

The Friend of man desires "

The Future



A wanderer is man from his birth.
He was born in a ship
On the breast of the River of Time.
Brimming with wonder and joy
He spreads out his arms to the light,
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.
As what he sees is, so have his thoughts
 been.

Whether he wakes
Where the snowy mountainous pass
Echoing the screams of the eagles
Hems in its gorges the bed
 Of the new-born clear-flowing stream:

Whether he first sees light
Where the river in gleaming rings
 Sluggishly winds through the plain:
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea:—
 As is the world on the banks
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each as he glides
Fable and dream

THE FUTURE

Of the lands which the River of Time
Had left ere he woke on its breast,
Or shall reach when his eyes have been
closed.

Only the tract where he sails
He wots of: only the thoughts,
Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green Earth any more
As she was by the sources of Time?
Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?
Who thinks as they thought,
The tribes who then lived on her breast,
Her vigorous primitive sons?

What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What Bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,

THE FUTURE

When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the River of Time
Now flows through with us, is the Plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confused as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which
we see.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the River of Time;
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.
But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

THE FUTURE

Haply, the River of Time,
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider statelier stream—
May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the gray expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with
foam,
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:
• As the pale waste widens around him—
As the banks fade dimmer away—
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

Morality



We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides.
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides:
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 't were done.
 Not till the hours of light return
 All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
Thy struggling task'd morality—
 Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air
 Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

MORALITY

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose eyes thou wert afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek.

“Ah child,” she cries, “that strife
divine—

Whence was it, for it is not mine?

“There is no effort on *my* brow—

I do not strive, I do not weep.

I rush with the swift spheres; and glow

In joy, and, when I will, I sleep.—

Yet that severe, that earnest air,

I saw, I felt it once—but where?

“I knew not yet the gauge of Time,

Nor wore the manacles of Space.

I felt it in some other clime—

I saw it in some other place.

—’T was when the heavenly house I trod,

And lay upon the breast of God.”

Shakespeare



Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art
still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest
hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwell-
ing-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sun-
beams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd,
self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at—
Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs
which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious
brow.

To an Independent Preacher

WHO PREACHED THAT
WE SHOULD BE "IN
HARMONY WITH NATURE"

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless
fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what
were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility;
To be like Nature strong, like Nature
cool:—
Know, man hath all which Nature hath,
but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood:
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore:
Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no
grave;
Man would be mild, and with safe con-
science blest.

AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER

Man must begin, know this, where Nature
ends;

Nature and man can never be fast friends.

Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her
slave!

To the
Hungarian
Nation

Not in sunk Spain's prolong'd death agony;
Not in rich England, bent but to make
 pour
The flood of the world's commerce on her
 shore;
Not in that madhouse, France, from
 whence the cry
Afflicts grave Heaven with its long sense-
 less roar;
Not in American vulgarity,
Nor wordy German imbecility—
Lies any hope of heroism more.
Hungarians! Save the world! Renew
 the stories
Of men who against hope repell'd the
 chain,
And make the world's dead spirit leap
 again!
On land renew that Greek exploit, whose
 glories
Hallow the Salaminian promontories,
And the Armada flung to the fierce main.

To a
Republican
Friend, 1848



God knows it, I am with you. If to prize
Those virtues, prized and practised by too
few,

But prized, but loved, but eminent in you,
Man's fundamental life; if to despise

The barren optimistic sophistries

Of comfortable moles, whom what they do
Teaches the limit of the just and true

(And for such doing they require not eyes);

If sadness at the long heart-wasting show

Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted;

If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow

The armies of the homeless and unfed: '

If these are yours, if this is what you are,

Then am I yours, and what you feel, I
share.

Continued



Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem
Rather to patience prompted, than that
proud

Prospect of hope which France proclaims
so loud—

France, famed in all great arts, in none
supreme;

Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we
dream,

Is on all sides o'ershadowed by the high
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,
Sparing us narrower margin than we
deem.

Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,
When, bursting through the net-work
superposed

By selfish occupation—plot and plan,
Lust, avarice, envy—liberated man,
All difference with his fellow-mortal closed,
Shall be left standing face to face with
God.

Religious Isolation



TO THE SAME FRIEND

Children (as such forgive them) have I
known,

Ever in their own eager pastime bent
To make the incurious by-stander, intent
On his own swarming thoughts, an
interest own:

Too fearful or too fond to play alone.
Do thou, whom light in thine own inmost
soul

(Not less thy boast) illuminates, control
Wishes unworthy of a man full-grown.
What though the holy secret, which
moulds thee

Moulds not the solid Earth? though
never Winds

Have whisper'd it to the complaining Sea,
Nature's great law, and law of all men's
minds?

To its own impulse every creature stirs:
Live by thy light, and Earth will live
by hers!

A Question



TO FAUSTA

Joy comes and goes: hope ebbs and flows,
Like the wave.
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength
of men.

Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles: and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly: friends smile and
die,
Like spring flowers.

Our vaunted life is one long funeral.

Men dig graves with bitter tears,
For their dead hopes; and all,
Mazed with doubts, and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

We count the hours: these dreams of ours,
False and hollow,

A QUESTION

Do we go hence and find they are not
dead? *

Joys we dimly apprehend,
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?

Lines written by a Death-Bed

Yes, now the longing is o'erpast,
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by
shame,

Shook her weak bosom day and night,
Consum'd her beauty like a flame,
And dimm'd it like the desert blast.
And though the curtains hide her face,
Yet were it lifted to the light
The sweet expression of her brow
Would charm the gazer till his thought
Eras'd the ravages of time,
Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought
A freshness back as of her prime—
So healing is her quiet now.
So perfectly the lines express
A placid, settled loveliness;
Her youngest rival's freshest grace.

But ah, though peace indeed is here,
And ease from shame, and rest from fear;
Though nothing can disarm now
The smoothness of that limpid brow;

WRITTEN BY A DEATH-BED

Yet is calm like this, in truth,
The crowning end of life and youth?
And when this boon rewards the dead,
Are all debts paid, has all been said?
And is the heart of youth so light,
Its step so firm, its eye so bright,
Because on its hot brow there blows
A wind of promise and repose
From the far grave, to which it goes?
Because it has the hope to come,
One day, to harbour in the tomb?
Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one
For daylight, for the cheerful sun,
For feeling nerves and living breath—
Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.
It 'dreams a bliss, if not more deep,
More grateful than this marble sleep.
It hears a voice within it tell—
"Calm's not life's crown, though calm is
well".
'Tis all perhaps which man acquires:
But 'tis not what our youth desires.

Stanzas in
Memory of
the Author of
"Obermann"



[ETIENNE PIVERT
DE SENANCOUR]

In front the awful Alpine track
Crawls up its rocky stair;
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths
Mute in their meadows lone;
The leaves are on the valley paths;
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea.
I hear the torrents roar.
—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee!
I feel thee near once more.

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE

I turn thy leaves: I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll;
That air of languor, cold, and death,
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,
Condemn'd to cast about,
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
For comfort from without:

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign;
A wounded human spirit turns
Here on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air
Fresh through these pages blows,
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their mute snows,

Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony.

AUTHOR, OF "OBERMANN"

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain, . . .
That, Obermann! the world around
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways.
To tell too deep ones is not well;
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd
In this our troubled day,
I know but two, who have attain'd,
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in gray old age,
His quiet home one keeps;
And one, the strong much-toiling Sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eye on nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear;
Clearer, how much! than ours: yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of a tremendous time,
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder sage!
To thee: we feel thy spell.
The hopeless tangle of our age—
Thou too has scann'd it well.

Immovable thou sittest; still
As death; composed to bear.
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,
One hears thee saying now—
"Greater by far than thou are dead:
Strive not: die also thou".

Ah! Two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without
And one to solitude.

The glow of thought, the thrill of life—
Where, where do these abound?
Not in the world, not in the strife
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, nor shared, the
 strife,
Knows how the day hath gone;
He only lives with the world's life
Who hath renounced his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd
Where thou, O Seer, art set;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—
The world is colder yet!

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE

And thou hast pleasures too to share
With those who come to thee:
Balms floating on thy mountain air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet door and seen
The summer day grow late,

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starr'd,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Lemman's waters, far below:
And watch'd the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snow:
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play:
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young;
Listen'd, and wept—Away!

Away the dreams that but deceive!
And thou, sad Guide, adieu!
I go; Fate drives me: but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line:
Can neither, when we will, enjoy;
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live:—but thou,
Thou melancholy Shade!
Wilt not, if thou canst see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,
The Children of the Second Birth
Whom the world could not tame;

And with that small transfigured Band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask who pined unseen,
Who was on action hurl'd,
Whose one bond is that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
Unsoil'd:—and so, Farewell!

Farewell!—Whether thou now liest near
That much-loved inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls
Issuing on that green place,
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date
Ere he plods on again:
Or whether, by maligner fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The Seine conducts her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
Thy hardly heard-of grave—

AUTHOR OF "OBERMANN"

Farewell! Under the sky we part,
In this stern Alpine dell.
O unstrung will! O broken heart!
A last. a last farewell!

Memorial Verses



APRIL, 1850

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come.
The last poetic verse is dumb.
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's
tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death, *
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little: but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with Eternal Law.
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said—
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the Iron Age,
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.

MEMORIAL VERSES

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear—
And struck his finger on the place
And said—Thou ailest here, and here.—
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife
The turmoil of expiring life;
He said—The end is everywhere:
Art still has truth, take refuge there.—
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts! rejoice
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom
Wordsworth is gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.
He too upon the wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round:
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.

MEMORIAL VERSES

He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breasts to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

Stanzas

IN MEMORY OF
EDWARD QUILLMAN

*

I saw him sensitive in frame,
I knew his spirits low;
And wish'd him health, success, and
fame—
I do not wish it now.

*For these are all their own reward,
And leave no good behind;
They try us, oftentimes make us hard,
Less modest, pure, and kind.*

Alas! yet to the suffering man,
In this his mortal state,
Friends could not give what fortune
can—
Health, ease, a heart elate.

But he is now by fortune soil'd
No more; and we retain
The memory of a man unspoil'd,
Sweet, generous, and humane—

EDWARD QUILLINAN

With all the fortunate have not,
With gentle voice and brow.
—Alive, we would have changed his lot,
We would not change it now.

Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse

Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
Past the dark forges long disused,
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While, hark! far down, with strangled
sound

Doth the Dead Guiers' stream complain .
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,
Over his boiling caldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white
Past limestone scars with rugged pines,
Showing—then blotting from our sight!
Halt—through the cloud-drift something
shines!

High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courrerio appear.

STANZAS FROM THE

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and
higher
Mounts up the stony forest-way.
At last the encircling trees retire;
Look! through the showery twilight gray
What pointed roofs are these advance?—
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!
Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate.
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day
Into their stone-carved basins cold
The splashing icy fountains play—
The human corridors behold!
Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer—
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle; rising then, with bare
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

GRANDE CHARTREUSE

Each takes, and then his visage wan
Is buried in his cowl once more.
The cells!—the suffering Son of Man
Upon the wall—the knee-worn floor—
And where they sleep, that wooden bed,
Which shall their coffin be, when dead!

The library, where tract and tome
Not to feed priestly pride are there,
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!
They paint of souls the inner strife,
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown—yet mild,
See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,
From England, Germany, or Spain—
All are before me! I behold
The House, the Brotherhood austere!
—And what am I, that I am here?

STANZAS FROM THE

Forgive me, masters of the mind!
At whose behest I long ago
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd—
I come not here to be your foe!
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak!
But as, on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me
round,
Till I possess my soul again;
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control!

GRANDE CHARTREUSE

For the world cries your faith is now
But a dead time's exploded dream;
My melancholy, sciolists say,
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme—
As if the world had ever had
A faith, or sciolists been sad.

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,
At least, the restlessness, the pain;
Be man henceforth no more a prey
To these out-dated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But—if you cannot give us ease—
Last of the race of them who grieve
Here leave us to die out with these
Last of the people who believe!
Silent, while years engrave the brow;
Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb
Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

STANZAS FROM THE

Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail,
Their voices were in all men's ears
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
And outcry of the former men?—
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,
Say, is life lighter now than then?
The sufferers died, they left their pain—
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the
 smart,
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
Carried thy lovely wail away,
Musical through Italian trees
Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
Inheritors of thy distress
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

GRANDE CHARTREUSE

Or are we easier, to have read,
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!—
The world, which for an idle day
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
Long since hath flung her weeds away.
The eternal trifier breaks your spell;
But we—we learnt your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity.
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe
The exulting thunder of your race;
You give the universe your law,
You triumph over time and space!
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
We laud them, but they are not ours.

STANZAS FROM THE

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall,
Forgotten in a forest-glade,
And secret from the eyes of all.
Deep, deep the greenwood round them
 waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves!

But, where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam—
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war!

And through the wood, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green;
Laughter and cries—those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their
 eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

GRANDE CHARTREUSE

O children, what do ye reply?—
"Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry
And call us?—but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow,
Whose bent was taken long ago.

"Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

"Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How can we flower in foreign air?
—Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;
And leave our desert to its peace!"

The World and the Quietist



TO CRITIAS

*Why, when the world's great mind
Hath finally inclined,
Why, you say, Critias, be debating still?
Why with these mournful rhymes
Learn'd in more languid climes,
Blame our activity
Who, with such passionate will,
Are what we mean to be?*

Critias, long since, I know
(For Fate decreed it so),
Long since the World hath set its heart
to live.
Long since with credulous zeal
It turns Life's mighty wheel.
Still doth for labourers send,
Who still their labour give;
And still expects an end.

THE WORLD AND THE QUIETIST

Yet, as the wheel flies round,
With no ungrateful sound
Do adverse voices fall on the World's ear.
Deafen'd by his own stir
The rugged Labourer
Caught not till then a sense
So glowing and so near
Of his omnipotence.

So, when the feast grew loud
In Susa's palace proud,
A white-rob'd slave stole to the Monarch's
side.
He spoke: the Monarch heard:
Felt the slow-rolling word
Swell his attentive soul.
Breath'd deeply as it died,
And drain'd his mighty bowl.

Resignation



TO FAUSTA

To die be given us, or attain!
Fierce work it were, to do again.
So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd
At burning noon: so warriors said,
Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the
miles.

Of dust that wreath'd their struggling files
Down Lydian mountains: so when snows
Round Alpine summits eddying rose,
The Goth, bound Romewards: so the Hun,
Crouch'd on his saddle, while the sun
Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
Through which the groaning Danube
strains

To the drear Euxine:—so pray all,
Whom labours, self-ordain'd, enthrall;
Because they to themselves propose
On this side the all-common close
A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.
So pray they: and to stand again
Where they stood once, to them were pain;

RESIGNATION.

Pain to thread back and to renew
Past straits, and currents long steer'd
through.

But milder natures, and more free;
Whom an unblam'd serenity
Hath freed from passions, and the state
Of struggle these necessitate;
Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd;
These mourn not, that their goings pay
Obedience to the passing day:
These claim not every laughing Hour
For handmaid to their striding power;
Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,
To await their march; and when appear'd,
Through the cold gloom, with measur'd
race
To usher for a destin'd space,
(Her own sweet errands all foregone)
The too imperious Traveller on.
These, Fausta, ask not this: nor thou,
Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now.

We left, just ten years since, you say,
That wayside inn we left to-day:
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,
Shouts greeting from his easy-chair;
High on a bank our leader stands,
Reviews and ranks his motley bands;

RESIGNATION

Makes clear our goal to every eye,
The valley's western boundary.
A gate swings to: our tide hath flow'd
Already from the silent road.
The valley pastures, one by one,
Are threaded, quiet in the sun:
And now beyond the rude stone bridge
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.
Its woody border, and the last
Of its dark upland farms is past;
Lone farms, with open-lying stores,
Under their burnish'd sycamores;
All past: and through the trees we glide
Emerging on the green hillside.
There climbing hangs, a far-seen sign,
Our wavering, many-colour'd line;
There winds, upstreaming slowly still
Over the summit of the hill.
And now, in front, behold outspread
Those upper regions we must tread;
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
The cheerful silence of the fells.
Some two hours' march, with serious air,
Through the deep noontide heats we fare;
The red-grouse, springing at our sound,
Skims, now and then, the shining ground;
No life, save his and ours, intrudes
Upon these breathless solitudes.
O joy! again the farms appear;
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer:

RESIGNATION

There springs the brook will guide us down,
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.
Lingering, we follow down: we gain
The town, the highway, and the plain.
And many a mile of dusty way,
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day;
But, Fausta, I remember well,
That, as the balmy darkness fell,
We bath'd our hands, with speechless glee,
That night, in the wide-glimmering Sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road,
Fausta, which ten years since we trod:
Alone we tread it, you and I;
Ghosts of that boisterous company.
Here, where the brook shines, near its
head,
In its clear, shallow, turf-fring'd bed;
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town;
Here sit we, and again unroll,
Though slowly, the familiar whole.
The solemn wastes of heathy hill
Sleep in the July sunshine still:
The self-same shadows now, as then,
Play through this grassy upland glen:
The loose dark stones on the green way
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay:
On this mild bank above the stream,
(You crush them) the blue gentians gleam.

RESIGNATION

Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
The sailing foam, the shining pool.—
These are not chang'd: and we, you say,
Are scarce more chang'd, in truth, than
they.

The Gipsies, whom we met below,
They too have long roam'd to and fro.
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.
And often to some kindly place
Chance guides the migratory race
Where, though long wanderings intervene,
They recognize a former scene.
The dingy tents are pitch'd: the fires
Give to the wind their wavering spires;
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame
Their children, as when first they came;
They see their shackled beasts again
Move, browsing, up the gray-wall'd lane.
Signs are not wanting, which might raise
The ghost in them of former days:
Signs are not wanting, if they would;
Suggestions to disquietude.
For them, for all, Time's busy touch,
While it mends little, troubles much:
Their joints grow stiffer; but the year
Runs his old round of dubious cheer:
Chilly they grow; yet winds in March,
Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch:

RESIGNATION

They must live still; and yet, God knows,
Crowded and keen the country grows:
It seems as if, in their decay,
The Law grew stronger every day.
So might they reason; so compare,
Fausta, times past with times that are.
But no:—they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way;
And they will rub through, if they can,
To-morrow on the self-same plan;
Till death arrive to supersede,
For them, vicissitude and need.

The Poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of Man.
Though he moves mountains; though his
day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway;
Though he hath loos'd a thousand chains;
Though he hath borne immortal pains;
Action and suffering though he know;
—He hath not liv'd, if he lives so.
He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand;
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude;
Exults: yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.

RESIGNATION

Beautiful eyes meet his; and 'he
Bears to admire uncravingly:
They pass; he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town;
Surveys each happy group, that fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets,
Each with some errand of its own;—
And does not say, *I am alone*.
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When Morning purifies the earth;
He leans upon a gate, and sees
The pastures, and the quiet trees.
Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,
Folds the still valley almost round;
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn;
In the hedge straggling to the stream,
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam:
But where the further side slopes down
He sees the drowsy new-wak'd clown
In his white quaint-embroider'd frock
Make, whistling, tow'rd his mist-wreath'd
flock;
Slowly, behind the heavy tread,
The wet flower'd grass heaves up its head.—

Lean'd on his gate, he gazes: tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears

RESIGNATION

The murmur of a thousand years:
Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole;
That general Life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
That Life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
The Life of plants, and stones, and rain:
The Life he craves; if not in vain
Fate gave, what Chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen:—but that wandering smile,
Fausta, betrays you cold the while.
Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their
home.

*Those Gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,
Are less, the Poet more, than man.
They feel not, though they move and see:
Deeper the Poet feels; but he
Breathes, when he will, immortal air,
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.
In the day's life, whose iron round
Hems us all in, he is not bound.
He escapes thence, but we abide.
Not deep the Poet sees, but wide.*

The World in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love:

RESIGNATION

Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,
Remorse, grief, joy:—and were the scope
Of these affections wider made,
Man still would see, and see dismay'd,
Beyond his passion's wildest range,
Far regions of eternal change.
Nay, and since death, which wipes out
man,
Finds him with many an unsolv'd plan,
With much unknown, and much untried,
Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,
Still gazing on the ever full
Eternal mundane spectacle;
This World in which we draw our breath,
In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death.

Blame thou not therefore him who dares
Judge vain beforehand human cares.
Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn.
Who needs not love and power, to know
Love transient, power an unreal show.
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways:—
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise.
Rather thyself for some aim pray
Nobler than this—to fill the day.
Rather, that heart, which burns in thee,
Ask, not to amuse, but to set free.
Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd
For quiet, and a fearless mind.

RESIGNATION

And though Fate grudge to thee and me
The Poet's rapt security,
Yet they, believe me, who await
No gifts from Chance, have conquer'd
Fate.

They, winning room to see and hear,
And to men's business not too near,
Through clouds of individual strife
Draw homeward to the general life.
Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd:
To the wise, foolish; to the world,
Weak: yet not weak, I might reply,
Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,
To whom each moment in its race,
Crowd as we will its neutral space,
Is but a quiet watershed
Whence, equally, the Seas of Life and
Death are fed.

Enough, we live:—and if a life,
With large results so little rife,
Though bearable, seem hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream which falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely
sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.

RESIGNATION

And even could the intemperate prayer
Man iterates, while these forbear,
For movement, for an ampler sphere,
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;
Not milder is the general lot
Because our spirits have forgot,
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
The something that infects the world.

Faded Leaves



THE RIVER

Still glides the stream, slow drops the
boat

Under the rustling poplars' shade;
Silent the swans beside us float—
None speaks, none heeds; ah, turn thy
head!

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland;
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine!
On mine let rest that lovely hand!

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,
My heart is swoln with love unsaid.
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,
And on thy shoulder rest my head!

Before I die—before the soul,
Which now is mine, must reattain
Immunity from my control,
And wander round the world again;

FADED LEAVES

Before this teas'd o'erlabour'd heart
For ever leaves its vain employ,
Dead to its deep habitual smart,
And dead to hopes of future joy.

TOO LATE

Each on his own strict line we move,
And some find death ere they find love;
So far apart their lives are thrown
From the twin soul which halves their
own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,
The lovers meet, but meet too late.
—Thy heart is mine!—*True, true! ah, true!*
—Then, love, thy hand!—*Ah no! adieu!*

SEPARATION

Stop!—not to me, at this bitter departing,
Speak of the sure consolations of Time!
Fresh be the wound, still-renew'd be its
smarting,
So but thy image endure in its prime.

But, if the steadfast commandment of Na-
ture
Wills that remembrance should always
decay—

FADED LEAVES

If the loved form and the deep-cherish'd
feature
Must, when unseen, from the soul fade
away—

Me let no half-effaced memories cumber!
Fled, fled at once, be all vestige of
thee!
Deep be the darkness and still be the
slumber—
Dead be the Past and its phantoms to
me!

Then, when we meet, and thy look strays
towards me,
Scanning my face and the changes
wrought there:
*Who, let me say, is this Stranger regards
me,
With the gray eyes, and the lovely brown
hair?*

ON THE RHINE

Vain is the effort to forget.
Some day I shall be cold, I know,
As is the eternal moonlit snow
Of the high Alps, to which I go:
But ah, not yet! not yet!

FADED LEAVES

Vain is the agony of grief.
'Tis true, indeed, an iron knot
Ties straitly up 'from mine thy lot,
And were it snapt—thou lov'st me not!
But is despair relief?

Awhile let me with thought have done;
And as this brimm'd unwrinkled Rhine
And that far purple mountain line
Lie sweetly in the look divine
Of the slow-sinking sun;

So let me lie, and calm as they
Let beam upon my inward view
Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue—
Eyes too expressive to be blue,
Too lovely to be gray.

Ah, Quiet, all things feel thy balm!
Those blue hills too, this river's flow,
Were restless once, but long ago.
Tamed in their turbulent youthful glow:
Their joy is in their calm.

LONGING

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

FADED LEAVES

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to others as to me.

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth.
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say—My love! why sufferest thou?

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Self-dependence



Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears
me

Forwards, forwards, o'er the star-lit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
"Ye who from my childhood up have
calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye Stars, ye
Waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew:
Still, still, let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you."

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault
of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer—
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *live* as
they.

SELF-DEPENDENCE

“Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things with-
out them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy..

“And with joy the stars perform their
shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.
For alone they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

“Bounded by themselves, and unobservant
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pour-
ing,
These attain the mighty life you see.”

O air-born Voice! long since, severely
clear,
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.
“Resolve to be thyself: and know, that
he
Who finds himself, loses his misery.”

Courage



True, we must tame our rebel will:
True, we must bow to Nature's law:
Must bear in silence many an ill;
Must learn to wail, renounce, withdraw.

Yet now, when boldest wills give place,
When Fate and Circumstance are strong,
And in their rush the human race
Are swept, like huddling sheep, along:

Those sterner spirits let me prize,
Who, though the tendence of the whole
They less than us might recognize,
Kept, more than us, their strength of
soul.

Yes, be the second Cato praised!
Not that he took the course to die—
But that, when 'gainst himself he raise
His arm, he raised it dauntlessly.

COURAGE

And, Byron! let us dare admire
If not thy fierce and turbid song,
Yet that, in anguish, doubt, desire,
Thy fiery courage still was strong.

The sun that on thy tossing pain
Did with such cold derision shine,
He crush'd thee not with his disdain—
He had his glow, and thou hadst thine

Our bane, disguise it as we may
To weakness, is a faltering course;
Oh that past times would give one day,
Join'd to its clearness, of their force!

The Buried Life

Light flows our war of mocking words,
and yet,

Behold, with tears my eyes are wet.
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile;
But there's a something in this breast
To which thy light words bring no rest
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.

Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love, thy inmost
soul.

Alas, is even Love too weak
To unlock the heart and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame
reproved:

THE BURIED LIFE

I knew they lived and moved
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
There beats one heart in every human
breast.

But we, my love—does a like spell be-
numb.

Our hearts—our voices?—must we too be
dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd:
For that which seals them hath been
deep ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be,
By what distractions he would be pos-
sess'd,

How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity;
That it might keep from his capricious
play

His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite, his being's law,
Bade, through the deep recesses of our
breast,

The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;

THE BURIED LIFE

And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.
But often in the world's most crowded
streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life,
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to enquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us, to know
Whence our thoughts come, and where
they go.
And many a man in his own breast then
delves,
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines:
And we have been on many thousand
lines,
And we have shown on each talent and
power,
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been our-
selves;
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through
our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.

THE BURIED LIFE

And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true:

And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand things of the hour
Their stupefying power,

Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call;
Yet still, from time to time, vague and
forlorn,

From the soul's subterranean depth up-
borne

As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—

When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,

Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear

Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd,
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our
breast

And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies
plain,

And what we mean, we say, and what we
would, we know.

THE BURIED LIFE

A man becomes aware of his life's flow
And hears its winding murmur, and he
sees

The meadows where it glides, the sun, the
breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his
breast.

And then he thinks he knows
The Hills where his life rose,
And the Sea where it goes.

Consolation



Mist clogs the sunshine,
Smoky dwarf houses
Hem me round everywhere.
A vague dejection
Weighs down my soul.

Yet, while I languish,
Everywhere, countless
Prospects unroll themselves,
And countless beings
Pass countless moods.

Far hence, in Asia,
On the smooth convent-roofs,
On the gold terraces,
Of holy Lassa,
Bright shines the sun.

Gray time-worn marbles
Hold the pure Muses.
In their cool gallery,
By yellow Tiber,
They still look fair.

CONSOLATION

Strange unlov'd uproar
Shrills through their portal.
Yet not on Helicon
Kept they more cloudless
Their noble calm.

Through sun-proof alleys
In a lone, sand-hemm'd
City of Africa,
A blind, led beggar,
Age-bow'd, asks alms.

No bolder Robber
Erst abode ambush'd
Deep in the sandy waste:
No clearer eyesight
Spied prey afar.

Saharan sand-winds
Sear'd his keen eyeballs.
Spent is the spoil he won.
For him the present
Holds only pain.

Two young, fair lovers,
Where the warm June wind,
Fresh from the summer fields,
Plays fondly round them,
Stand, tranc'd in joy.

CONSOLATION

With sweet, join'd voices,
And with eyes brimming—
"Ah," they cry, "Destiny!
Prolong the present!
Time! stand still here!"

The prompt stern Goddess
Shakes her head, frowning.
Times gives his hour-glass
Its due reversal.
Their hour is gone.

With weak indulgence
Did the just Goddess
Lengthen their happiness;
She lengthen'd also
Distress elsewhere.

The hour, whose happy
Unalloy'd moments
I would eternalize,
Ten thousand mourners
Well pleas'd see end.

The bleak stern hour,
Whose severe moments
I would annihilate,
Is pass'd by others
In warmth, light, joy.

CONSOLATION

Time, so complain'd of,
Who to no one man
Shows partiality,
Brings round to all men
Some undimm'd hours.

Absence



In this fair stranger's eyes of gray
Thine eyes, my love! I see.
I shudder; for the passing day
Had borne me far from thee.

This is the curse of life! that not
A nobler, calmer train
Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot
Our passions from our brain;

But each day brings its petty dust
Our soon-choked souls to fill,
And we forget because we must
And not because we will.

I struggle towards the light; and ye,
Once-long'd-for storms of love!
If with the light ye cannot be,
I bear that ye remove.

I struggled towards the light—but oh,
While yet the night is chill,
Upon time's barren, stormy flow,
Stay with me, Marguerite, still!

To Marguerite



We were apart; yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more
true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learn'd—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith is often unreturn'd.
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell—
Thou lov'st no more;—Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell!—and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spheréd course
To haunt the place where passions reign—
Back to thy solitude again!

TO MARGUERITE

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:
“Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone”.

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean and clouds and night and day;
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *dream'd* two human hearts might
 blend
In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolong'd; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

To Marguerite
(*continued*)



Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our margs meet again!

TO MARGUERITE

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

Requiescat



Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew.
In quiet she reposes:
Ah! would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required:
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

A Southern Night



The sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes,
Melt into open, moonlit sea;
The soft Mediterranean breaks
At my feet, free.

Dotting the fields of corn and vine,
Like ghosts the huge, gnarl'd olives
stand.
Behind, that lovely mountain-line!
While, by the strand,

Cette, with its glistening houses white,
Curves with the curving beach away
To where the lighthouse beacons bright
Far in the bay.

Ah! such a night, so soft, so lone,
So moonlit, saw me once of yore
Wander unquiet, and my own
Vext heart deplore.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

But now that trouble is forgot;
Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,
My brother! and thine early lot,
Possess me quite.

The murmur of this Midland deep
Is heard to-night around thy grave,
There, where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep
O'erfrowns the wave.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,
With Indian heats at last fordone,
With public toil and private teen—
Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning gray,
I see the smoke-crown'd vessel come;
Slow round her paddles dies away
The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side;
Ah, gently place him on the bench!
That spirit—if all have not yet died—
A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,
The mien of youth we used to see,
Poor, gallant boy!—for such thou wast,
Still art, to me.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse.
The eyes are glazed, thou canst not
 speak;
And whiter than thy white burnous
 That wasted cheek!

Enough! The boat, with quiet shock,
 Unto its haven coming nigh,
Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock
 Lands thee to die.

Ah me! Gibraltar's strand is far,
 But farther yet across the brine
Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,
 Remote from thine.

For there, where morning's sacred fount
 Its golden rain on earth confers,
The snowy Himalayan Mount
 O'ershadows hers.

Strange irony of fate, alas,
 Which, for two jaded English, saves,
When from their dusty life they pass,
 Such peaceful graves!

In cities should we English lie,
 Where cries are rising ever new,
And men's incessant stream goes by—
 We who pursue

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

Our business with unslackening stride,
 Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,
The soft Mediterranean side,
 The Nile, the East,

And see all sights from pole to pole,
 And glance, and nod, and bustle by,
And never once possess our soul
 Before we die.

Not by those hoary Indian hills,
 Not by this gracious Midland sea
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,
 Should our graves be.

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,
 And men were specks, and life a play;
Who made the roots of trees his bed,
 And once a day

With staff and gourd his way did bend
 To villages and homes of man,
For food to keep him till he end
 His mortal span

And the pure goal of being reach;
 Hoar-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,
Without companion, without speech,
 By day and night

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

Pondering God's mysteries untold,
And tranquil as the glacier-snows:
He by those Indian mountains old
Might well repose.

Some gray crusading knight austere,
Who bore Saint Louis company,
And came home hurt to death, and here
Landed to die;

Some youthful troubadour, whose tongue
Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,
Who here outworn had sunk, and sung
His dying strain;

Some girl, who here from the castle-
bower,
With furtive step and cheek of flame,
'Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
By moonlight came

To meet her pirate-lover's ship;
And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair
Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip
And floating hair;

And lived some moons in happy trance,
Then learnt his death and pined away—
Such by these waters of romance
'T was meet to lay.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

But you—a grave for knight or sage,
Romantic, solitary, still,
O spent ones of a work-day age!
Befits you ill.

So sang I; but the midnight breeze,
Down to the brimm'd, moon-charmed
main,
Comes softly through the olive-trees,
And checks my strain.

I think of her, whose gentle tongue
All plaint in her own cause controll'd;
Of thee I think, my brother! young
In heart, high-soul'd—

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,
That cordial hand, that bearing free,
I see them still, I see them now,
Shall always see!

And what but gentleness untired,
And what but noble feeling warm,
Wherever shown, howe'er inspired,
Is grace, is charm?

What else is all these waters are,
What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,
What else is bright, what else is fair,
What else serene?

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine!

Gently by his, ye waters, glide!

To that in you which is divine

They were allied.

•

To My Friends



Laugh, my Friends, and without blame
Lightly quit what lightly came:
Rich to-morrow as to-day
Spend as madly as you may.
I, with little land to stir,
Am the exacter labourer.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

But my youth reminds me—"Thou
Hast lived light as these live now:
As these are, thou too wert such;
Much hast had, hast squander'd much".
Fortune's now less frequent heir,
Ah! I husband what's grown rare.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Young, I said: "A face is gone
If too hotly mused upon:
And our best impressions are
Those that do themselves repair".

TO MY FRIENDS

Many a face I then let by
Ah! is faded utterly.

Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Marguerite says: "As last year went,
So the coming year'll be spent:
Some day next year, I shall be,
Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee".

Ah! I hope—yet, once away,
What may chain us, who can say?

Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair around:
Tied under the archest chin
Mockery ever ambush'd in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.

Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that figure's pliant grace
As she towards me lean'd her face,
Half refused and half resign'd,
Murmuring, "Art thou still unkind?"
Many a broken promise then
Was new made—to break again.

Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

TO MY FRIENDS

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,
Eager tell-tales of her mind:
Paint, with their impetuous stress
Of enquiring tenderness,
Those frank eyes, where deep doth lie
An angelic gravity.

Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

What, my Friends, these feeble lines
Show, you say, my love declines?
To paint ill as I have done,
Proves forgetfulness begun?
Time's gay minions, pleased you see,
Time, your master, govern me.

Pleased, you mock the fruitless cry:
"Quick, thy tablets, Memory!"

Ah, too true! Time's current strong
Leaves us true to nothing long.
Yet, if little stays with man,
Ah! retain we all we can!
If the clear impression dies,
Ah, the dim remembrance prize!
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Euphrosyne
(Indifference)



I must not say that thou wert true,
Yet let me say that thou wert fair.
And they that lovely face who view,
They will not ask if truth be there.

Truth—what is truth? Two bleeding!
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried,
Outwearied with their lonely parts,
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear;
Their lot was but to weep and moan.
Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,
For neither could subsist alone!

But souls whom some benignant breath
Has charm'd at birth from gloom and care,
These ask no love—these plight no faith,
No, they are happy as they are.

EUPHROSYNE

The world to them may homage make,
And garlands for their forehead weave.
And what the world can give, they take:
But they bring more than they receive.

They smile upon the world: their ears
To one demand alone are coy.
They will not give us love and tears—
They bring us light, and warmth, and joy

It was not love that heaved thy breast,
Fair child! it was the bliss within.
Adieu! and say that one, at least,
Was just to what he did not win.

The World's Triumphs

So far as I conceive the world's rebuke
To him address'd who would recast her
 new,
Not from herself her fame of strength she
 took,
But from their weakness who would work
 her rue.
"Behold," she cries, "so many rages lull'd,
So many fiery spirits quite cool'd down;
Look how so many valours, long undull'd,
After short commerce with me, fear my
 frown!
Thou too, when thou against my crimes
 wouldst cry,
Let thy foreboded homage check thy
 tongue:"—
The world speaks well; yet might her foe
 reply:
"Are wills so weak?—then let not mine
 wait long!
Hast thou so rare a poison?—let me be
Keener to slay thee, lest thou poison me."

To the Duke of Wellington



ON HEARING HIM
MISPRAISED

Because thou hast believ'd, the wheels of
life

Stand never idle, but go always round:
Not by their hands, who vex the patient
ground,

Mov'd only; but by genius, in the strife
Of all its chafing torrents after thaw,
Urg'd; and to feed whose movement, spin-
ning sand,

The feeble sons of pleasure set their hand:
And, in this vision of the general law,
Hast labour'd with the foremost, hast be-
come

Laborious, persevering, serious, firm;
For this, thy track, across the fretful foam
Of vehement actions without scope or term,
Call'd History, keeps a splendour: due to
wit,

Which saw *one* clue to life, and follow'd it.

To a Gipsy
Child by the
Sea-shore

DOUGLAS,
ISLE OF MAN

Who taught this pleading to unpractis'd
eyes?

Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?
Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
What clouds thy forehead, and fore-dates
thy doom?

Lol! sails that gleam a moment and are
gone;

The swinging waters, and the cluster'd
pier.

Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,
Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy
Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor
longings vain,

Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy—
Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain:

TO A GIPSY CHILD

Thou, drugging pain by patience; half
averse
From thine own mother's breast, that
knows not thee;
With eyes that sought thine eyes thou
didst converse,
And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not
known:
Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.
Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine
own:
Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth.

What mood wears like complexion to thy
woe?—
His, who in mountain glens, at noon of
day,
Sits rapt, and hears the battle break
below?—
Ah! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.

What exile's, changing bitter thoughts
with glad?
What seraph's, in some alien planet
born?—
No exile's dream was ever half so sad,
Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

BY THE SEA-SHORE

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore;
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream
no more?

Or do I wait, to hear some gray-hair'd
king
Unravel all his many-colour'd lore .
Whose mind hath known all arts of govern-
ing,
Mus'd much, lov'd life a little, loath'd it
more?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow
slope,
Which years, and curious thought, and
suffering give.—
Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
Foreseen thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain
Whose sureness gray-hair'd scholars hardly
learn!
What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy
strain?
What heavens, what earth, what sun shalt
thou discern?

TO A GIPSY CHILD

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks
no star,
Match that funereal aspect with her pall,
I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too
far,
Have known too much—or else forgotten
all.

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps:
Hath sown with cloudless passages the
tale
Of grief, and eas'd us with a thousand
sleeps.

Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
Not daily labour's dull, Lethæan spring,
Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing.

And though thou glean what strenuous
gleaners may
In the throng'd fields where winning comes
by strife;
And though the just sun gild, as all men
pray,
Some reaches of thy storm-vext stream of
life:

BY THE SEA-SHORE

Though that blank sunshine blind thee;
 though the cloud
That sever'd the world's march and thine,
 is gone:
Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be
 too proud
To halve a lodging that was all her own:

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
 Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy
 chain.
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt
 return,
And wear this majesty of grief again.

Parting



Ye storm-winds of Autumn!
Who rush by, who shake
The window, and ruffle
The gleam-lighted lake;
Who cross to the hillside
Thin-sprinkled with farms,
Where the high woods strip sadly
Their yellowing arms—
Ye are bound for the mountains!
Ah! with you let me go
Where your cold, distant barrier,
The vast range of snow,
Through the loose clouds lifts dimly
Its white peaks in air—
How deep is their stillness!
Ah, would I were there!

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English
lawn

Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?

PARTING

Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain
brook
That the sweet voice its upland clearness
took?

Ah! it comes nearer—
Sweet notes, this way!

Hark! fast by the window
The rushing winds go,
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,
The vast seas of snow!
There the torrents drive upward
Their rock-strangled hum;
There the avalanche thunders
The hoarse torrent dumb.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye torrents, I come!

But who is this, by the half-open'd door,
Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor?
The sweet blue eyes—the soft, ash-colour'd
hair—
The cheeks that still their gentle paleness
wear—
The lovely lips, with their arch smile that
tells
The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit
dwells—

Ah! they bend nearer—
Sweet lips, this way!

PARTING

Hark! the wind rushes past us!
Ah! with that let me go
To the clear waning hillside
Unspotted by snow,
There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,
The frore mountain-wall,
Where the nighed snow-bed sprays down
Its powdery fall.
There its dusky blue clusters
The aconite spreads;
There the pines slope, the cloud-strips
Hung soft in their heads.
No life but, at moments,
The mountain-bee's hum.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye pine-woods, I come!

Forgive me! forgive me!
Ah, Marguerite, fain
Would these arms reach to clasp thee!
But see! 'tis in vain.

In the void air, towards thee,
My stretch'd arms are cast;
But a sea rolls between us—
Our different past!

To the lips, ah! of others
Those lips have been prest,
And others, ere I was,
Were clasp'd to that breast;

PARTING

Far, far from each other
Our spirits have grown;
And what heart knows another?
Ah! who knows his own?

Blow, ye winds! lift me with you!
I come to the wild.
Fold closely, O Nature!
Thine arms round thy child.

To thee only God granted
A heart ever new—
To all always open,
To all always true.

Ah! calm me, restore me;
And dry up my tears
On thy high mountain-platforms,
Where morn first appears;

Where the white mists, for ever,
Are spread and unfurl'd—
In the stir of the forces
Whence issued the world.

Despondency

The thoughts that raise your steady glow
Like stars on life's cold nights,
Which others know, or say they know—
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like glea^{sky}, in my spirit's
sky,
But they will not remain;
They light me once, they hurry by,
And never come again.

Quiet Work.

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their
 enmity—

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in
 repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords
 ring,
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain
 turmoil,
Labourers that shall not fail, when man
 is gone.

The Hayswater Boat



A region desolate and wild.
Black, chafing water: and afloat,
And lonely as a truant child
In a waste wood, a single boat:
No mast, no sails are set thereon;
It moves, but never moveth on:
And welters like a human thing
Amid the wild waves weltering.

Behind, a buried vale doth sleep,
Far down the torrent cleaves its way:
In front the dumb rock rises steep,
A fretted wall of blue and gray;
Of shooting cliff and crumbled ~~one~~
With many a wild weed overgrown:
All else, black water: and afloat
One rood from shore, that single boat.

Last night the wind was up and strong;
The gray-streak'd waters labour still:
The strong blast brought a pigmy throng
From that mild hollow in the hill;

THE HAYSWATER BOAT

From those twin brooks, that beached
strand;
So featly strewn with drifted sand;
From those weird domes of mounded
green
That spot the solitary scene.

This boat they found against the shore;
The glossy rushes nodded by,
One rood from land they push'd, no more:
Then rested, listening silently.
The loud, rains lash'd the mountain's
crown,
The grating shingle straggled down:
All night they sate; then stole away,
And left it rocking in the bay.

Last night?—I look'd, the sky was clear.
The boat was old, a batter'd boat.
In sooth, it seems a hundred year
Since that strange crew did ride afloat.
The boat hath drifted in the bay—
The oars have moulder'd as they lay—
The rudder swings—yet none doth steer.
What living hand hath brought it here?

Human Life



What mortal, when he saw,
Life's voyage done, his Heavenly Friend,
Could ever yet dare tell him fearlessly,
"I have kept uninfring'd my nature's law,
The inly-written chart thou gavest me
To guide me, I have steer'd by to the
end"?

Ah! let us make no claim,
On life's incognizable sea,
To too exact a steering of our way.
Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim,
If some fair coast have lur'd us to make
stay,
Or some friend hail'd us to keep company.

Ay, we would each fain drive
At random, and not steer by rule.
Weakness! and worse, weakness bestow'd
in vain!
Winds from our side the unsuiting con-
sort rive:

HUMAN LIFE

We rush by coasts where we had lief
remain.

Man cannot, though he would, live
Chance's fool.

No! as the foaming swath
Of torn-up water, on the main,
Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar
On either side the black deep-furrow'd
path

Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,
And never touches the ship-side again;

Even so we leave behind,
As charter'd by some unknown Powers,
We stem across the sea of life by night,
The joys which were not for our use
design'd.

The friends to whom we had no natural
right:

The homes that were not destin'd to be
ours.

Urania (Excuse)



I too have suffer'd; yet I know
She is not 'cold, though she seems so:
She is not cold, she is not light;
But our ignoble souls lack might.

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,
While we for hopeless passion die;
Yet she could love, those eyes declare,
Were but men nobler than they are.

Eagerly once her gracious ken
Was turn'd upon the sons of men.
But light the serious visage grew—
She look'd, and smiled, and saw them
through.

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,
Our labour'd puny passion-fits—
Ah, may she scorn them still, till we
Scorn them as bitterly as she!

URANIA

Yet oh, that Fate would let her see
One of some better race than we;
One for whose sake she once might prove
How deeply she who scorns can love.

His eyes be like the starry lights—
His voice like sounds of summer nights—
In all his lovely mien let pierce
The magic of the universe.

And she to him will reach her hand,
And gazing in his eyes will stand,
And know her friend, and weep for glee,
And cry—Long, long I've look'd for thee.—

Then will she weep—with smiles, till then,
Coldly she mocks the sons of men.
Till then her lovely eyes maintain
Their gay, unwavering, deep disdain.

A Farewell



My horse's feet beside the lake,
Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams
 lay,
Sent echoes through the night to wake
Each glistening strand, each heath-fringed
 bay.

The poplar avenue was pass'd,
And the roof'd bridge that spans the
 stream;
Up the steep street I hurried fast,
Led by the taper's starlike beam.

I came! I saw thee rise! the blood
Pour'd flushing to thy languid cheek.
Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,
In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew;—ah, soon I could discern
A trouble in thine alter'd air!
Thy hand lay languidly in mine,
Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew
 rare.

A FAREWELL

I blame thee not!—this heart, I know,
To be long loved was never framed;
For something in its depths doth glow
Too strange, too restless, too untamed.

And women—things that live and move
Mined by the fever of the soul—
They seek to find in those they love
Stern strength, and promise of control.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways—
These they themselves have tried and
known;
They ask a soul that never sways
With the blind gusts which shake their
own.

I too have felt the load I bore
In a too strong emotion's sway;
I too have wish'd, no woman more,
This starting, feverish heart away.

I too have long'd for trenchant force,
And will like a dividing spear:
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous
course,
Which knows no doubt, which feels no
fear.

A FAREWELL

But in the world I learnt, what there
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

Go, then!—till Time and Fate impress
This truth on thee, be mine no more!
They will!—for thou, I feel, not less
Than I, wert destined to this lore.

We school our manners, act our parts,
But He, who sees us through and
through,
Knows that the bent of both our hearts
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas!
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course
To every thought the mass ignore;
We shall not then call hardness force,
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

A FAREWELL

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,
Our soothed, encouraged souls will dare
To seem as free from pride and guile.
As good, as generous, as they are.

Then we shall know our friends!—though
much
Will have been lost—the help in strife,
The thousand sweet, still joys of such
As hand in hand face earthly life—

Though these be lost, there will be yet
A sympathy august and pure;
Ennobled by a vast regret,
And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,
May then more neighbouring courses ply;
May to each other be brought near,
And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,
My sister! to maintain with thee
The hush among the shining stars,
The calm upon the moonlit sea!

How sweet to feel, on the boon air,
All our unquiet pulses cease!
To feel that nothing can impair
The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

A FAREWELL

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd
On this wild earth of hate and fear;
The thirst for peace a raving world
Would never let us satiate here.

A Modern Sappho

They are gone: all is still: Foolish heart,
dost thou quiver?

Nothing moves on the lawn but the
quick lilac shade.

Far up gleams the house, and beneath
flows the river.

Here lean, my head, on this cold
balustrade.

Ere he come: ere the boat, by the shining-
branch'd border

Of dark elms shoot round, dropping
down the proud stream;

Let me pause, let me strive, in myself
find some order,

Ere this boat-music sound, ere their
broider'd flags gleam.

Is it hope makes me linger? the dim
thought, that sorrow

Means parting? that only in absence
lies pain?

A MODERN SAPPHO

It was well with me once if I saw him:
to-morrow
May bring one of the old happy
moments again.

Last night we stood earnestly talking
together—
She enter'd—that moment his eyes turn'd
from me.
Fasten'd on her dark hair and her wreath
of white heather—
As yesterday was, so to-morrow will be.

Their love, let me know, must grow
strong and yet stronger,
Their passion burn more, ere it ceases
to burn:
They must love—while they must: But
the hearts that love longer
Are rare: ah! most loves but flow once,
and return.

I shall suffer; but they will outlive their
affection:
I shall weep; but their love will be cool-
ing: and he,
As he drifts to fatigue, discontent, and
dejection,
Will be brought, thou poor heart! how
much nearer to thee!

A MODERN SAPPHO

For cold is his eye to mere beauty, who,
 breaking
 The strong band which beauty around
 him hath furl'd,
Disenchanted by habit, and newly awaking,
 Looks languidly round on a gloom-
 buried world.

Through that gloom he will see but a
 shadow appearing,
 Perceive but a voice as I come to his
 side:
But deeper their voice grows, and nobler
 their bearing,
Whose youth in the fires of anguish
 hath died.

Then, to wait. But what notes down the
 wind, hark! are driving?
 'Tis he! 'tis the boat, shooting round
 by the trees!
Let my turn, if it *will* come, be swift in
 arriving!
Ah! hope cannot long lighten torments
 like these.

Hast thou yet dealt him, O Life, thy full
 measure?
World, have thy children yet bow'd at
 his knee?

A MODERN SAPPHO

Hast thou with myrtle-leaf crown'd him,
O Pleasure?

—Crown, crown him quickly, and leave
him for me!

In Utrumque
Paratus



If, in the silent mind of One all-pure,
At first imagin'd lay
The sacred world; and by procession sure
From those still deeps, in form and colour
drest,
Seasons alternating, and night and day,
The long-mus'd thought to north south
east and west
Took then its all-seen way:

O waking on a world which thus-wise
springs!
Whether it needs thee count
Betwixt thy waking and the birth of
things
Ages or hours: O waking on Life's stream!
By lonely pureness to the all-pure Fount
(Only by this thou canst) the colour'd
dream
Of Life remount.

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow;
And faint the city gleams;
Rare the lone pastoral huts: marvel not
thou!

The solemn peaks but to the stars are
known,
But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:
Alone the sun arises, and alone
Spring the great streams.

But, if the wild unfather'd mass no birth
In divine seats hath known:
In the blank, echoing solitude, if Earth,
Rocking her obscure body to and fro,
Ceases not from all time to heave and
groan,
Unfruitful oft, and, at her happiest throe,
Forms, what she forms, alone:

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bath'd
head
Piercing the solemn cloud
Round thy still dreaming brother-world
outspread!
O man, whom Earth, thy long-vext
mother, bare
Not without joy; so radiant, so endow'd—
(Such happy issue crown'd her painful
care)
Be not too proud!

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

Oh when most self-exalted, most alone,
Chief dreamer, own thy dream!
Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet un-
known;
Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's
part;
Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning
teem.
Oh, what a spasm shakes the dreamer's
heart—
“*I, too, but seem!*”

Revolutions



Before Man parted for this earthly strand,
While yet upon the verge of heaven he
stood,
God put a heap of letters in his hand,
And bade him make with them what
word he could.

And man has turn'd them many times:
made Greece,
Rome, England, France:—yes, nor in vain
essay'd
Way after way, changes that never cease.
The letters have combined: something was
made.

But ah, an inextinguishable sense
Haunts him that he has not made what
he should.
That he has still, though old, to re-
commence,
Since he has not yet found the word God
would.

REVOLUTIONS

And Empire after Empire, at their height
Of sway, have felt this boding sense
 come on;
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,
And droop'd, and slowly died upon their
 throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last
 appear
The word, the order, which God meant
 should be.
Ah, we shall know *that* well when it
 comes near.
The band will quit Man's heart:—he will
 breathe free.

A Dream



Was it a dream? We sail'd, I thought
 we sail'd,
Martin and I, down a green Alpine stream,
Under o'erhanging pines; the morning
 sun,
On the wet umbrage of their glossy tops,
On the red pinings of their forest floor,
Drew a warm scent abroad; behind the
 pines
The mountain skirts, with all their sylvan
 change
Of bright-leaf'd chestnuts and moss'd
 walnut-trees,
And the frail scarlet-berried ash, began.
Swiss chalets glitter'd on the dewy slopes,
And from some swarded shelf high up,
 there came
Notes of wild pastoral music: over all
Ranged, diamond-bright, the eternal wall
 of snow.
Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's
 edge,

A DREAM

Back'd by the pines, a plank-built cottage
stood,
Bright in the sun; the climbing gourd-
plant's leaves
Muffled its walls, and on the stone-strewn
roof
Lay the warm golden gourds; golden,
within,
Under the eaves, peer'd rows of Indian
corn.
We shot beneath the cottage with the
stream.
On the brown rude-carved balcony, two
Forms
Came forth—Olivia's, Marguerite! and
thine.
Clad were they both in white, flowers in
their breasts;
Straw hats bedeck'd their heads, with
ribbons blue
Which waved and on their shoulders,
fluttering, play'd.
They saw us, they conferr'd; their bosoms
heaved,
And more than mortal impulse fill'd their
eyes.
Their lips moved; their white arms, waved
eagerly,
Flash'd once, like falling streams:—we
rose, we gazed:

A DREAM

One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat
Hung poised—and then the darting River
of Life

Loud thundering, bore us by: swift, swift
it foam'd;

Black under cliffs it raced, round head-
lands shone.

Soon the plank'd cottage 'mid the sun-
warm'd pines

Faded, the moss, the rocks; us burning
Plains,

Bristled with cities, us the Sea received.

Lines

WRITTEN IN KEN-
SINGTON GARDENS

In this lone open glade I lie,
Screen'd by dark trees on either hand;
And at its head, to stay the eye,
Those black-topp'd, red-boled pine-trees
stand.

The clouded sky is still and gray,
Through silken rifts soft peers the sun,
Light the green-foliaged chestnuts play,
The darker elms stand grave and dun.

The birds sing sweetly in these trees
Across the girdling city's hum;
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy:
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

KENSINGTON GARDENS

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think sometimes, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world,
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new.
When I, who watch them, am away
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass.
The flowers close, the birds are fed:
The night comes down upon the grass:
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm Soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

KENSINGTON GARDENS

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give.
Calm, calm me more; nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

The Church of Brou



I. THE CASTLE

Down the Savoy valleys sounding,
Echoing round this castle old,
'Mid the distant mountain chalets
Hark! what bell for church is toll'd?

In the bright October morning
Savoy's Duke had left his bride.
From the Castle, past the drawbridge,
Flow'd the hunters' merry tide.

Steeds are neighing, gallants glittering.
Gay, her smiling lord to greet,
From her mullion'd chamber casement
Smiles the Duchess Marguerite.

From Vienna by the Danube,
Here she came, a bride, in spring.
Now the autumn crisps the forest;
Hunters gather, bugles ring.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

Hounds are pulling, prickers swearing,
Horses fret, and boar-spears glance:
Off!—They sweep the marshy forests,
Westward, on the side of France.

Hark! the game's on foot; they scatter:—
Down the forest ridings lone,
Furious, single horsemen gallop—
Hark! a shout—a crash—a groan!

Pale and breathless, came the hunters.
On the turf dead lies the boar.
God! the Duke lies stretch'd beside him—
Senseless, weltering in his gore.

In the dull October evening,
Down the leaf-strewn forest road,
To the Castle, past the drawbridge,
Came the hunters with their load.

In the hall, with sconces blazing,
Ladies waiting round her seat,
Cloth'd in smiles, beneath the dais
Sate the Duchess Marguerite.

Hark! below the gates unbarring!
Tramp of men and quick commands!
"Tis my lord come back from hunt-
ing."—
And the Duchess claps her hands.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

Slow and tired, came the hunters;
Stopp'd in darkness in the court.
"—Ho, this way, ye laggard hunters!
To the hall! What sport, what sport?"—

Slow they enter'd with their Master;
In the hall they laid him down.
On his coat were leaves and blood-stains;
On his brow an angry frown.

Dead her princely youthful husband
Lay before his youthful wife;
Bloody 'neath the flaring sconces:
And the sight froze all her life.

In Vienna by the Danube,
Kings hold revel, gallants meet:
Gay of old amid the gayest,
Was the Duchess Marguerite.

In Vienna by the Danube,
Feast and dance her youth beguil'd.
Till that hour she never sorrow'd;
But from then she never smil'd.

'Mid the Savoy mountain valleys
Far from town or haunt of man,
Stands a lonely Church, unfinish'd,
Which the Duchess Maud began:

THE CHURCH OF BROU

Old, that Duchess stern began it;
In gray age, with palsied hands,
But she died, while it was building,
And the Church unfinish'd stands;

Stands as erst the builders left it,
When she sank into her grave.
Mountain greensward paves the chancel;
Harebells flower in the nave.

"In my castle all is sorrow,"—
Said the Duchess Marguerite then.
"Guide me, vassals, to the mountain!
We will build the Church again."—

Sandall'd palmers, faring homeward,
Austrian knights from Syria came.
"Austrian wanderers bring, O warders,
Homage to your Austrian dame."—

From the gate the warders answer'd;
"Gone, O knights, is she you knew.
Dead our Duke, and gone his Duchess.
Seek her at the Church of Brou."—

Austrian knights and march-worn palmers
Climb the winding mountain way,
Reach the valley, where the Fabric
Rises higher day by day.

THE CHURCH OF BRÖU

Stones are sawing, hammers ringing;
On the work the bright sun shines:
In the Savoy mountain meadows,
By the stream, below the pines.

On her palfrey white the Duchess
Sate and watch'd her working train;
Flemish carvers, Lombard gilders,
German masons, smiths from Spain.

Clad in black, on her white palfrey,
Her old architect beside—
There they found her in the mountains,
Morn and noon and eventide.

There she sate, and watch'd the builders,
Till the Church was roof'd and done.
Last of all, the builders rear'd her
In the nave a tomb of stone.

On the tomb two Forms they sculptur'd,
Lifelike in the marble pale.
One, the Duke in helm and armour;
One, the Duchess in her veil.

Round the tomb the carv'd stone fret-
work
Was at Easter-tide put on.
Then the Duchess clos'd her labours:
And she died at the St. John.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

II. THE CHURCH

Upon the glistening leaden roof
Of the new Pile, the sunlight shines,
The stream goes leaping by.
The hills are clothed with pines sun-proof;
Mid bright green fields, below the pines,
Stands the Church on high.
What Church is this, from men aloof?
'Tis the Church of Brou.

At sunrise, from their dewy lair
Crossing the stream, the kine are seen
Round the wall to stray;
The churchyard wall that clips the square
Of shaven hill-sward trim and green
Where last year they lay.
But all things now are order'd fair
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, at the matin-chime,
The Alpine peasants, two and three,
Climb up here to pray.
Burghers and dames, at summer's prime,
Ride out to church from Chambery,
Dight with mantles gay.
But else it is a lonely time
Round the Church of Brou.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

On Sundays, too, a priest doth come
From the wall'd town beyond the pass,
Down the mountain way.

And then you hear the organ's hum,
You hear the white-robed priest say mass,
And the people pray.

But else the woods and fields are dumb
Round the Church of Brou.

And after church, when mass is done,
The people to the nave repair
Round the tomb to stray;

And marvel at the Forms of stone,
And praise the chisell'd broideries rare.
Then they drop away.

The princely Pair are left alone
In the Church of Brou.

III. THE TOMB

So rest, for ever rest, O Princely Pair!
In your high Church, 'mid the still moun-
tain air,

Where horn, and hound, and vassals, never
come.

Only the blessed Saints are smiling dumb;
From the rich painted windows of the
nave,

On aisle, and transept, and your marble
grave:

THE CHURCH OF BRÛU

Where thou, young Prince, shalt never
more arise
From the fringed mattress where thy
Duchess lies,
On autumn mornings, when the bugle
sounds,
And ride across the drawbridge with thy
hounds
To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve.
And thou, O Princess, shalt no more
receive,
Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,
The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,
Coming benighted to the castle-gate.
So sleep, for ever sleep, O Marble Pair!
Or if ye wake, let it be then, when fair
On the carved Western Front a flood of
light
Streams from the setting sun, and colours
bright,
Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs
brave
In the vast western window of the nave;
And on the pavement round the Tomb
there glints
A chequer-work of glowing sapphire-tints,
And amethyst, and ruby;—then uncloset
Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,
And from your broider'd pillows lift your
heads,

THE CHURCH OF BROU

And rise upon your cold white marble
beds,

And looking down on the warm rosy tints
That chequer, at your feet, the illumined
flints,

Say — “ *What is this? we are in bliss—
forgiven—*

*Behold the pavement of the courts of
Heaven!*”—

Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain
Doth rustlingly above your heads complain
On the smooth leaden roof, and on the
walls

Shedding her pensive light at intervals
The Moon through the clere-story windows
shines,

And the wind wails among the mountain-
pines.

Then, gazing up through the dim pillars
high,

The foliaged marble forest where ye lie,
“ *Hush*”—ye will say—“ *it is eternity.*

*This is the glimmering verge of Heaven,
and these*

The columns of the Heavenly Palaces.”—

And in the sweeping of the wind your ear
The passage of the Angel's wings will
hear,

And on the lichen-crustled leads above
The rustle of the eternal rain of Love.

A Summer Night



In the deserted moon-blanch'd street
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world:—but see!
A break between the housetops shows
The moon, and, lost behind her, fading
dim.

Into the dewy dark obscurity
Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.
And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought
Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moon-lit deep
As clearly as at noon;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heaved dazzlingly between;
Houses with long white sweep
Girdled the glistening bay:
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread
away.

A SUMMER NIGHT

That night was far more fair;
But the same restless pacings to and fro,
And the same agitated heart was there,
And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say,
"Hast thou then still the old unquiet
breast

That neither deadens into rest
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away,
But fluctuates to and fro
Never by passion quite possess'd,
And never quite benumb'd by the world's
sway?"

And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield, and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they
languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork
give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison
wall.

And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest

A SUMMER NIGHT

Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their
breast.

And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which
they are prest,
Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still un-
blest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison, and depart
On the wide Ocean of Life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his
heart

Listeth, will sail;
Nor does he know how there prevail,
Despotic on life's sea,
Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.
Awhile he holds some false way, unde-
barr'd

By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves.
And then the tempest strikes him, and be-
tween

The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale Master on his spar-strewn
deck

With anguish'd face and flying hair

A. SUMMER. NIGHT

Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows
 not where,
Still standing for some false impossible
 shore.

And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepen-
 ing gloom

Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman
 loom,

And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?

Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow
 of stain,

Clearness divine!

Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions
 have no sign'

Of languor, though so calm, and though
 so great

Are yet untroubled and unpassionate:

Who, though so noble, share in the world's
 toil,

And though so task'd, keep free from dust
 and soil:

I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain

Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd
 in vain;

A SUMMER NIGHT

But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizon
 be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency;
How it were good to sink there, and
 breathe free;
How high a lot to fill
Is left to each man still.

The Neckan



In summer, on the headlands,
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,
Green rolls the Baltic Sea,
And there, below the Neckan's feet,
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,
Its shells and roses pale.
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings;
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,
And sings a mournful stave
Of all he saw and felt on earth,
Far from the green sea wave.

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd
By castle, field, and town.—
But earthly knights have harder hearts
Than the Sea Children own.

THE NECKAN

Sings of his earthly bridal—
Priests, knights, and ladies gay.

"And who art, thou," the priest began;
"Sir Knight, who wedd'st to-day?"—

"I am no knight," he answer'd;

"From the sea waves I come."—

The knights drew sword, the ladies
scream'd,

The surpliced priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel

He vanish'd with his bride,

And bore her down to the sea halls,

Beneath the salt sea tide.

He sings how she sits weeping

'Mid shells that round her lie.

"False Neckan shares my bed," she weeps;

"No Christian mate have I."

He sings how through the billows

He rose to earth again,

And sought a priest to sign the cross,

That Neckan Heaven might gain.

He sings how, on an evening,

Beneath the birch-trees cool,

He sate and played his harp of gold,

Beside the river pool.

THE NECKAN

Beside the pool sate Neckan—
Tears fill'd his cold blue eye.
On his white mule, across the bridge,
A cassock'd priest rode by.

“Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,
And play'st thy harp of gold?
Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,
Than thou shalt Heaven behold.”—

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,
And vanish'd with his mule.
And Neckan in the twilight gray
Wept by the river pool.

In summer, on the headlands,
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings this plaintive song.

Self-Deception



Say, what blinds us, that we claim the
glory
Of possessing powers not our share?—
Since man woke on earth, he knows his
story,
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God:
Saw the gifts, the powers it might in-
herit;
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager be-
ing
Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each
gift it saw.
Then, as now, a Power beyond our see-
ing
Staved us back, and gave our choice the
law.

SELF-DECEPTION

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven
guided

Man's new spirit, since it was not we?

Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who de-
cided

What the parts, and what the whole should
be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining

Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.

Still these waste us with their hopeless
straining—

Still the attempt to use them proves them
null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;

Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.

Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,

Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for
powers.

Ends we seek we never shall attain.

Ah, *some* power exists there, which is ours?

Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

The Lake

Again I see my bliss at hand,
The town, the lake are here;
My Marguerite smiles upon the s
Unalter'd with the year.

I know that graceful figure fair,
That cheek of languid hue;
I know that soft enkerchief'd hair
And those sweet eyes of blue.

Again I spring to make my choice
Again in tones of ire
I hear a God's tremendous voice—
“Be counsell'd, and retire”.

Ye guiding Powers who join and
What would ye have with me?
Ah, warn some more ambitious h
And let the peaceful be!

Men of Genius



Silent, the Lord of the world
Eyes from the heavenly height,
Girt by his far-shining train,
Us, who with banners unfurl'd
Fight life's many-chanc'd fight
Madly below, in the plain.

Then saith the Lord to his own:—
“See ye the battle below?
Turmoil of death and of birth!
Too long let we them groan.
Haste, arise ye, and go;
Carry my peace upon earth.”

Gladly they rise at his call;
Gladly they take his command;
Gladly descend to the plain.
Alas! How few of them all——
Those willing servants—shall stand
In their Master's presence again.

MEN OF GENIUS

Some in the tumult are lost:

Baffled, bewilder'd, they stray.

Some as prisoners draw breath.

Others—the bravest—are cross'd,

On the height of their bold-follow'd way,

By the swift-rushing missile of Death.

Hardly, hardly shall one

Come, with countenance bright,

O'er the cloud-wrapt, perilous plain:

His Master's errand well done,

Safe through the smoke of the fight,

Back to his Master again.

Balder Dead



I. SENDING

So on the floor lay Balder dead; and
round
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts,
and spears,
Which all the Gods in sport had idly
thrown
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or
clove;
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal
bough
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no
charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes
came,
And stood round Balder on the bloody
floor,
Weeping and wailing; and Valhalla rang
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries;
And on the tables stood the untasted
meats,

BALDER DEAD

And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls
the wine.

And now would night have fall'n, and
found them yet

Wailing; but otherwise was Odin's will.
And thus the Father of the ages spake:—

“Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of
wail!

Not to lament in was Valhalla made,
If any here might weep for Balder's death,
I most might weep, his father; such a
son

I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.
But he has met that doom, which long
ago

The Nornies, when his mother bare him,
spun, .

And fate set seal, that so his end must be.
Balder has met his death, and ye sur-
vive—

Weep him an hour, but what can grief
avail?

For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet
your doom,

All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,
And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all.

But ours we shall not meet, when that
day comes,

With women's tears and weak complain-
ing cries—

BALDER DEAD

Why should we meet another's portion so?
Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,
With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed
 and stern,
To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.
By me shall vengeance on the murderer
 Lok,
The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods,
 we hate,
Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.
Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning
 dawns,
Bring wood to the sea-shore to Balder's
 ship,
And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,
And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and
 put
Fire to the wood, and send him out to
 sea
To burn; for that is what the dead de-
 sire."
So spake the King of Gods, and straight-
 way rose,
And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he
 rode;
And from the hall of Heaven he rode
 away,
To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,
The mount, from whence his eye surveys
 the world.

BALDER DEAD

And far from Heaven he turn'd his shin-
ing orbs

To look on Midgard, and the earth, and
men.

And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his
gaze

Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow;
And on the Finns, the gentlest of man-
kind,

Fair men, who live in holes under the
ground;

Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,
Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing
Gods;

For well he knew the Gods would heed
his word,

And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's
pyre.

But in Valhalla, all the Gods went back
From around Balder, all the Heroes went;
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.
And on their golden chairs they sate again,
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven;
And before each the cooks who served
them placed

New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns
with mead.

So they, with pent-up hearts, and tearless
eyes,

BALDER DEAD

Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,
While twilight fell, and sacred night came
on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting
Gods

In Odin's halls, and went through Asgard
streets,

And past the haven where the Gods have
moor'd

Their ships, and through the gate, beyond
the wall;

Though sightless, yet his own mind led
the God.

Down to the margin of the roaring sea
He came, and sadly went along the sand,
Between the waves and black o'erhanging
cliffs

Where in and out the screaming sea-fowl
fly;

Until he came to where a gully breaks
Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream
runs down

From the high moors behind, and meets
the sea.

There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the
house

Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods,
And shows its lighted windows to the main.
There he went up, and passed the open
doors;

BALDER'S DEAD

And in the hall he found those women
old,

The prophetesses, who by rite eterne
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred
fire

Both night and day; and by the inner
wall

Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,
With folded hands, revolving things to
come.

To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and
said:—

“Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in
me!

For, first, thou barest me with blinded
eyes,

Sightless and helpless, wandering weak
in Heaven;

And, after that, of ignorant witless mind
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul;

That I alone must take the branch from
Lok,

The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods,
we hate,

And cast it at the dear-loved Balder's
breast

At whom the Gods in sport their weapons
threw—

'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no
charm.

BALDER, DEAD

Now therefore what to attempt, or whither
fly,

For who will bear my hateful sight in
Heaven?

Can I, O mother, bring them Balder
back?

Or—for thou know'st the fates, and things
allow'd—

Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,
And make exchange, and give my life for
his?"

He spoke, the mother of the Gods re-
plied:—

"Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,
Sightless in soul and eye, what words
are these?

That one, long portion'd with his doom
of death,

Should change his lot, and fill another's
life,

And Hela yield to this, and let him go!
On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not
thee;

Nor doth she count this life a price for
that.

For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,
Would freely die to purchase Balder back,
And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy
realm.

For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven

BALDER DEAD

Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and
fray,
Waiting the darkness of the final times,
That one should grudge its loss for Balder's
sake,
Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God.
But fate withstands, and laws forbid this
way.
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail;
But much must still be tried, which shall
but fail."

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and
said:—

"What way is this, O mother, that thou
show'st?

Is it a matter which a God might try?"

And straight the mother of the Gods
replied:—

"There is a road which leads to Hela's
realm,

Untrodden, lonely, far from light and
Heaven.

Who goes this way must take no other
horse

To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.
Nor must he choose that common path of
Gods

Which every day they come and go in
Heaven,

BALDER DEAD

O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heim-
dall's watch,
Past Midgard fortress, down to earth and
men.
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven,
and ride
Nine days, nine nights, toward the nor-
thern ice,
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roar-
ing streams.
And he will reach on the tenth morn a
bridge
Which spans with golden arches Giall's
stream,
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel
keeps,
Who tells the passing troops of dead their
way
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's
realm.
And she will bid him northward steer his
course.
Then he will journey through no lighted
land,
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set;
But he must ever watch the northern
Bear,
Who from her frozen height with jealous
eye

BALDER? DEAD

Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the
south,

And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.

And straight he will come down to Ocean's
strand—

Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the
world,

And on whose marge the ancient giants
dwell.

But he will reach its unknown northern
shore,

Far, far beyond the outmost giant's home,
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of
snow.

And he must fare across the dismal ice
Northward, until he meets a stretching
wall

Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
But then he must dismount, and on the
ice

Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's
horse,

And make him leap the grate, and come
within

And he will see stretch round him Hela's
realm,

The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the
dead,

And hear the roaring of the streams of
Hell.

BALDER DEAD

And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,
And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's
throne.

Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts
Who all will flit, like eddyng leaves,
around;

But he must straight accost their solemn
queen,

And pay her homage, and entreat with
prayers,

Telling her all that grief they have in
Heaven

For Balder, whom she holds by right be-
low;

If haply he may melt her heart with words,
And make her yield, and give him Balder
back."

She spoke; but Hoder answer'd her and
said:—

"Mother, a dreadful way is this thou
show'st;

No journey for a sightless God to go!"

And straight the mother of the Gods
replied:—

"Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my
son.

But he whom first thou meetest when
thou com'st

To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way,
Shall go; and I will be his guide unseen".

BALDER DEAD

She spoke, and on her face let fall her
veil,
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded
hands,
But at the central hearth those women old,
Who while the Mother spake had ceased
their toil,
Began again to heap the sacred fire.
And Hoder turned, and left his mother's
house,
Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea;
And came again down to the roaring
waves,
And back along the beach to Asgard went,
Pondering on that which Frea said should
be.
But night came down, and darken'd
Asgard streets.
Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods
arose,
And lighted torches, and took up the
corpse
Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,
And laid it on a bier, and bare him home
Through the fast-darkening streets to his
own house,
Breidablik, on whose columns Balder
graved
The enchantments that recall the dead to
life.

BALDER DEAD

For wise he was, and many curious arts,
Postures of runes, and healing herbs he
knew;

Unhappy! but that art he did not know,
To keep his own life safe, and see the
sun.

There to his hall the Gods brought Balder
home,

And each bespoke him as he laid him
down:—

“Would that ourselves, O Balder, we
were borne

Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our
kin,

So thou might'st live, and still delight
the Gods!”

They spake; and each went home to
his own house.

But there was one, the first of all the
Gods

For speed, and Hermod was his name in
Heaven;

Most fleet he was, but now he went the
last,

Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,
Which he in Asgard built him, there to
dwell,

Against the harbour, by the city-wall.

Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up
From the sea cityward, and knew his step;

BALDER, DEAD

Nor yet could, Hermod, see his brother's
face,

For it grew dark; but Hoder touch'd his
arm.

And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers
Brushes across a tired traveller's face
Who shuffles through the deep dew-
moisten'd dust,

On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,
And starts him, that he thinks a ghost
went by—

So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and
said:—

“Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth
with dawn

To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back;
And they shall be thy guides, who have
the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and dis-
appear'd.

And Hermod gazed into the night, and
said:—

“Who is it utters through the dark his
hest

So quickly, and will wait for no reply?
The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's
voice.

Howbeit I will see, and do his hest;
For there rang note divine in that com-
mand.”

BALDER DEAD

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod
came
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own
house;
And all the Gods lay down in their own
homes.
And Hoder too came home, distraught
with grief,
Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other
Gods;
And he went in, and shut the door, and
fixt
His sword upright, and fell on it, and
died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,
The throne, from which his eye surveys
the world;
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness
rode
To Asgard. And the stars came out in
heaven,
High over Asgard, to light home the King.
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart;
And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,
And the Gods trembled on their golden
beds
Hearing the wrathful Father coming
home—

BALDER DEAD

For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin
came.

And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left
Sleipner; and Sleipner went to his own
stall,

And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.—

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,
Came with the Goddesses who wrought
her will,

And stood by Balder lying on his bier.

And at his head and feet she station'd
Scalds

Who in their lives were famous for their
song;

These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive
strain,

A dirge—and Nanna and her train re-
plied.

And far into the night they wail'd their
dirge.

But when their souls were satisfied with
wail,

They went, and laid them down, and
Nanna went

Into an upper chamber, and lay down;

And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 't was when night is bordering hard
on dawn,

When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk
low;

BALDER DEAD

Then Balder's spirit through the gloom
drew near,

In garb, in form, in feature as he was,
Alive; and still the rays were round his
head

Which were his glorious mark in Heaven;
he stood

Over against the curtain of the bed,
And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and
spoke:—

“Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st
thy woe!

Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,
Tears wet the pillow by the cheek; but
thou,

Like a young child, hast cried thyself to
sleep.

Sleep on; I watch thee, and am here to
aid.

Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul!
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.

For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods pre-
pare

To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with
fire,

That sad, sole honour of the dead; and
thee

They think to burn, and all my choicest
wealth,

BALDER DEAD.

With me, for thus ordains the common
rite.
But it shall not be so; but mild, but
swift,
But painless shall a stroke from Frea
come,
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy
soul,
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine,
not thee.
And well I know that by no stroke of
death,
Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to
die,
So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,
Whom thou so well hast loved; but I can
smooth
Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers
avail.
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward
Death from thy head, and with the Gods
in Heaven
Prolong thy life, though not by thee de-
sired—
But right bars this, not only thy desire.
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering
realm;
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of
dead,

BALDER DEAD

Whom Hela, with austere control presides.
For of the race of Gods is no one there,
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen;
And all the nobler souls of mortal men
On battle-field have met their death, and
now

Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall;
Only the inglorious sort are there below,
The old, the cowards, and the weak are
there—

Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.
But even there, O Nanna, we might find
Some solace in each other's look and
speech,

Wandering together through that gloomy
world,

And talking of the life we led in Heaven,
While we yet lived, among the other
Gods."

He spake, and straight his lineaments
began

To fade; and Nanna in her sleep stretched
out

Her arms towards him with a cry—but
he

Mournfully shook his head, and disap-
pear'd.

And as the woodman sees a little smoke
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,
So Balder faded in the night away.

BALDER DEAD

And Nanna on her bed sank back; but
then
Frea, the mother of Gods, with stroke
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,
Which took, on Balder's track, the way
below;
And instantly the sacred morn appear'd.

II. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD

Forth from the east, up the ascent of
Heaven,
Day drove his courser with the shining
mane;
And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,
The golden-crested cock began to crow.
Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,
With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall
crow,
Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to
Heaven;
But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,
To wake the Gods and Heroes to their
tasks.
And all the Gods, and all the Heroes,
woke.
And from their beds the Heroes rose, and
dunn'd
Their arms, and led their horses from the
stall,

BALDER DEAD

And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court
Were ranged; and then the daily fray
began.

And all day long they there are hack'd
and hewn,

'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd
off, and blood;

But all at night return to Odin's hall,
Woundless and fresh; such lot is theirs in
Heaven.

And the Valkyries on their steeds went
forth

Tow'rd earth and fights of men; and at
their side

Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies,
rode;

And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's
watch,

Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they
came;

There through some battle-field, where
men fall fast,

Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they
ride,

And pick the bravest warriors out for
death,

Whom they bring back with them at
night to Heaven

To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's
hall.

BALDER-DEAD

But the Gods went out now, as other-
while,
Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought,
To feast their eyes with looking on the
fray;
Nor did they to their judgment-place re-
pair
By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,
Where they hold council, and give laws
for men.
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of
gold;
Where are in circle ranged twelve golden
chairs,
And in the midst one higher, Odin's
throne.
There all the Gods in silence sate them
down;
And thus the Father of the ages spake:—
“Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the
sea-shore,
With all which it beseems the dead to
have,
And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship;
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn
his corpse.
But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and
ride down
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back.”

BALDER DEAD

So said he; and the Gods arose, and took
Axes and ropes, and at their head came
Thor,
Shouldering his hammer, which the giants
know.
Forth wended they, and drave their steeds
before.
And up the dewy mountain-tracks they
fared
To the dark forests, in the early dawn;
And up and down, and side and slant they
roam'd,
And from the glens all day an echo came.
Of crashing falls; for with his hammer
Thor
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded
pines,
And burst their roots, while to their tops
the Gods
Made fast the woven ropes, and haled
them down,
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them
on the sward,
And bound the logs behind their steeds to
draw,
And drave them homeward; and the snort-
ing steeds
Went straining through the crackling
brushwood down,
And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods

BALDER DEAD

Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried
boughs.

And they came out upon the plain, and
pass'd

Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,
And loosed them of their loads on the sea-
shore;

And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's
ship;

And every God went home to his own
house.

But when the Gods were to the forest
gone,

Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth
And saddled him; before that, Sleipner
brook'd

No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,
On his broad back no lesser rider bore;
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,
Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,
Knowing the God they went to seek, how
dear.

But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared
In silence up the dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven,
and went

All day; and daylight waned, and night
came on.

And all that night he rode, and jour-
ney'd so,

BALDER DEAD

Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.
And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,
In the strait passage, at the farther end,
Where the road issues between walling rocks.
Scant space that warder left for passers-by;—
But as when cowherds in October drive
Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass
To winter-pasture on the southern side,
And on the ridge a wagon chokes the way,
Wedged in the snow; then painfully the hinds
With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,
Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow
To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—
So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,
And question'd Hermod as he came, and said:—

BALDER DEAD

"Who art thou on thy black and fiery
horse
Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's
stream
Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race
and home.
But yestermorn, five troops of dead pass'd
by,
Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,
Nor shook the bridge so much as thou
alone.
And thou hast flesh and colour on thy
cheeks,
Like men who live, and draw the vital air;
Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men
deceased,
Souls bound below, my daily passers here."
And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd
her:—
"O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son
Of Odin; and my high-roof'd house is
built
Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods;
And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.
And I come, sent this road on Balder's
track;
Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge
or no?"
He spake; the warder of the bridge re-
plied:—

BALDER DEAD

“O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods
Or of the horses of the Gods resound
Upon my bridge; and, when they cross,
I know.

Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the
road

Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's
realm.

From here the cold white mist can be dis-
cern'd,

Nor lit with sun, but through the dark-
some air

By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,
Which hangs over the ice where lies the
road.

For in that ice are lost those northern
streams,

Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,
Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,
The spring that bubbles up by Hela's
throne.

There are the joyless seats, the haunt of
ghosts,

Hela's pale swarms; and there was Balder
bound.

Ride on! pass free! but he by this is there.”

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left
him room.

And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by
Across the bridge; then she took post again.

BALDER DEAD

But northward Hermod rode, the way below;
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,
But by the blotted light of stars he fared.
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,
At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice
Still north, until he met a stretching wall
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,
On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
And made him leap the grate, and came within.
And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,
And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.
For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,
Outmost; the others near the centre run—
The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain;
These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.

BALDER DEAD

And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy
tribes;—
And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-
beds
Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,
On autumn-days, before they cross the sea;
And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs
Quivering, and others skim the river-
streams,
And their quick twittering fills the banks
and shores—
So around Hermod swarm'd the twitter-
ing ghosts:
Women, and infants, and young men who
died
Too soon for fame, with white ungraven
shields;
And old men, known to glory, but their
star
Betray'd them, and of wasting age they
died,
Not wounds; yet, dying, they their armour
wore,
And now have chief regard in Hela's
realm.
Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous
crew,
Greeted of none, disfeatured and forlorn—
Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd
alive;

BALDER DEAD

And round them still the wattled hurdles
hung,
Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and
trod them deep,
To hide their shameful memory from men.
But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the
throne
Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,
And Hela set thereon, with countenance
stern;
And thus bespake him first the solemn
queen:—

“Unhappy, how hast thou endured to
leave
The light, and journey to the cheerless land
Where idly flit about the feeble shades?
How didst thou cross the bridge o'er,
Giall's stream,
Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore?
Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the
wall?”

She spake: but down off Sleipner Her-
mod sprang,
And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her
knees;
And spake, and mild entreated her, and
said:—

“O Hela, wherefore should the Gods
declare
Their errands to each other, or the ways

BALDER DEAD

They go? the errand and the way is known.
Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief
 we have in Heaven

For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right
 below.

Restore him! for what part fulfils he here?
Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,
And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?
Not for such end, O queen, thou hold'st
 thy realm.

For Heaven was Balder born, the city of
 Gods

And Heroes, where they live in light and
 joy.

Thither restore him, for his place is there!"

He spoke; and grave replied the solemn
 queen:—

"Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of
 Heaven!

A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.
Do the Gods send to me to make them
 blest?

Small bliss my race hath of the Gods
 obtained.

Three mighty children to my father Lok
Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—
Fenris the Wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.
Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,
Who since in your despite hath wax'd
 amain,

'BALDER--DEAD'

And now with gleaming ring enfolds the
world;
Me on this cheerless nether world ye
threw,
And gave me nine unlighted realms to
rule;
While on his island in the lake afar,
Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not
strength
Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris
bound.
Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father
wise,
Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in
Odin's hall;
But him too foes await, and netted snares,
And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks,
And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.
Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his
bonds,
And with himself set us his offspring free
When he guides Muspel's children to their
bourne.
Till then in peril or in pain we live,
Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods
our aid?
Howbeit, we abide our day; till then,
We do not as some feebler haters do—
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs
Helpless to better us, or ruin them.

BALDER DEAD

Come then! if Balder was so dear beloved,
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.
Show me through all the world the signs of grief!
Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops!
Let all that lives and moves upon the earth
Weep him, and all that is without life weep;
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him; plants and stones!
So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,
And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."

She spake; and Hermod answer'd her, and said:—

"Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.

But come, declare me this, and truly tell:
May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,
Or is it here withheld to greet the dead?"

He spake, and straightway Hela answered him:—

"Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold

BALDER DEAD

Converse; his speech remains, though he
be dead."

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd,
and spake:—

"Even in the abode of death, O Balder,
hail!

Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech,
is thine,

The terms of thy releasement hence to
Heaven;

Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.

For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,

Who see the light, and blest in Asgard
dwell;

Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's
realm.

And sure of all the happiest far art thou

Who ever have been known in earth or
Heaven;

Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,

And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's
side,

Here, and hast honour among all the
dead."

He spake; and Balder utter'd him reply,
But feebly, as a voice far off; he said:—

"Hermod the nimble, gild me not my
death!

Better to live a serf, a captured man,

Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,

BALDER DEAD

Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the
dead.

And now I count not of these terms as
safe

To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,
Though I be loved, and many mourn my
death;

For double-minded ever was the seed
Of Lok, and double are the gifts they
give.

Howbeit, report thy message; and there-
with,

To Odin, to my father, take this ring,
Memorial of me, whether saved or no;
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou
hast seen

Me sitting here below by Hela's side,
Crown'd, having honour among all the
dead."

He spake, and raised his hand, and
gave the ring.

And with inscrutable regard the queen
Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood
dumb.

But Hermod took the ring, and yet once
more

Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn
queen;

Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to
ride

BALDER DEAD

Back, through the astonish'd tribes of
dead, to Heaven.

And to the wall he came, and found the
grate

Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.

And o'er the ice he fared to Ocean's strand,

And up from thence, a wet and misty road,

To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's
stream.

Worse was that way to go than to return,

For him;—for others all return is barr'd.

Nine days he took to go, two to return,

And on the twelfth morn saw the light of
Heaven.

And as a traveller in the early dawn

To the steep edge of some great valley
comes,

Through which a river flows, and sees,
beneath

Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the
vale,

But o'er them, on the farther slope,
descries

Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright
with sun—

So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw
Heaven.

And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air
Of Heaven; and mightily, as wing'd, he
flew.

BALDER DEAD

And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard
rise;
And he drew near, and heard no living
voice
In Asgard; and the golden halls were
dumb.
Then Hermod knew what labour held the
Gods;
And through the empty streets he rode,
and pass'd
Under the gate-house to the sands, and
found
The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship.

III. FUNERAL

The Gods held talk together, group'd in
knots,
Round Balder's corpse, which they had
thither borne;
And Hermod came down tow'rds them
from the gate.
And Lok, the father of the serpent, first
Beheld him come, and to his neighbour
spake:—
“See, here is Hermod, who comes
single back
From Hell and shall I tell thee how he
seems?
Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,

BALDER DEAD

Some morn, at market, in a crowded
town—

Through many streets the poor beast runs
in vain,

And follows this man after that, for hours;
And, late at evening, spent and panting,
falls

Before a stranger's threshold, not his
home,

With flanks a-tremble, and his slender
tongue

Hangs quivering out between his dust-
smear'd jaws,

And piteously he eyes the passers-by;

But home his master comes to his own
farm,

Far in the country, wondering where he
is—

So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home."

And straight his neighbour, moved with
wrath, replied:—

"Deceiver! fair in form, but false in heart!
Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we
hate—

Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee
gibe!

'Would I might see him snatch thee in his
hand,

And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with
cords,

BALDER DEAD

And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim!
If clear from plotting Balder's death, to
swim;

But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,
And perish, against fate before thy day."

So they two soft to one another spake.
But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw
His messenger; and he stood forth, and
cried.

And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner
down,

And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,
And greeted Odin and the Gods, and
said:—

"Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of
Heaven!

Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I
come.

Into the joyless kingdom have I been,
Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes
Of ghosts, and communed with their
solemn queen;

And to your prayer she sends you this
reply:

*Show her through all the world the signs
of grief!*

*Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder
stops!*

*Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him: plants
and stones:*

BALDER: DEAD

*So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,
And bend her heart, and give you Balder back."*

He spoke; and all the Gods to Odin look'd;
And straight the Father of the ages said:—
"Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.

But now, put on your arms, and mount
your steeds,
And in procession all come near, and weep
Balder; for that is what the dead desire.
When ye enough have wept, then build a
pile
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse
with fire
Out of our sight; that we may turn from
grief,
And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven."

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd; and Odin
donn'd
His dazzling corselet and his helm of gold,
And led the way on Sleipner; and the rest
Follow'd, in tears, their father and their
king.
And thrice in arms around the dead they
rode,
Weeping; the sands were wetted, and their
arms,

BALDER DEAD

With their thick-falling tears—so good a
friend

They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved
a God.

And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands
On Balder's breast, and thus began the
wail:—

“Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved,
my son!

In that great day, the twilight of the
Gods,

When Muspel's children shall beleaguer
Heaven,

Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy
arm.”

Thou camest near the next, O warrior
Thor!

Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot
drawn,

Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd
rein;

And over Balder's corpse these words didst
say:—

“Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome
land,

And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,
Now, and I know not how they prize thee
there—

But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and
mourn'd.

For haughty spirits and high wraths are
rife

Among the Gods and Heroes here in
Heaven,

As among those whose joy and work is
war;

And daily strifes arise, and angry words.

But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,

Heard no one ever an injurious word

To God or Hero, but thou keptest back

The others, labouring to compose their
brawls.

Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind!

For we lose him, who smoothed all strife
in Heaven."

He spake, and all the Gods assenting
wail'd.

And Freya next came nigh, with golden
tears;

The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all
Most honour'd after Freya, Odin's wife.

Her long ago the wandering Oder took

To mate, but left her to roam distant lands;

Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears
of gold.

Names hath she many; Vanadis on earth

They call her, Freya is her name in
Heaven;

She in her hands took Balder's head, and
spake:—

BALDER DEAD

“ Balder, my brother, thou art gone a
road

Unknown and long, and haply on that way
My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast
met,

For in the paths of Heaven he is not
found.

Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast
To his neglected wife, and what he is,
And wring his heart with shame, to hear
thy word!

For he, my husband, left me here to pine,
Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart
First drove him from me into distant
lands;

Since then I vainly seek him through the
world,

And weep from shore to shore my golden
tears,

But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.
Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,
To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and
say:

*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears!
One day the wandering Oder will return,
Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search
On some great road, or resting in an inn,
Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree.*

So Balder said;—but Oder, well I know,
My truant Oder I shall see no more

BALDER DEAD

To the world's end; and Balder, now is
gone,

And I am left uncomforted in Heaven."

She spake; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.

Last from among the Heroes one came
near,

No God, but of the hero-troop the chief—
Regner, who swept the northern sea with
fleets,

And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy
isles,

Living; but Ella captured him and slew;—
A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of
Heaven,

Now time obscures it, and men's later
deeds.

He last approach'd the corpse, and spake,
and said:—

"Balder, there yet are many Scalds in
Heaven

Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother
Brage,

Whom we may bid to sing, though thou
art gone.

And all these gladly, while we drink, we
hear,

After the feast is done, in Odin's hall;

But they harp ever on one string, and
wake

BALDER DEAD

Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,
Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,
And blood, and ringing blows, and violent
death.

But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst
strike

Another note, and, like a bird in spring,
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,
And wife, and children, and our ancient
home.

Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me
dead,

Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—
But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland
Isle,

And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend
Her flock along the white Norwegian
beach.

Tears started to mine eyes with yearning
joy,

Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee
dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes
groan'd.

But now the sun had pass'd the height of
Heaven,

And soon had all that day been spent in
wail;

But then the Father of the ages said:—

BALDER DEAD.

“Ye Gods, there well may be too much
of wail!

Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's
ship;

Heap on the deck the logs, and build the
pyre.”

But when the Gods and Heroes heard,
they brought

The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty; then the
corpse

Of Balder on the highest top they laid,
With Nanna on his right, and on his left
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand
slew.

And they set jars of wine and oil to lean
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with tur-
pentine;

And brought his arms and gold, and all
his stuff,

And slew the dogs who at his table fed,
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most
he loved,

And placed them on the pyre, and Odin
threw

A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.
The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the
sails,

Then they put fire to the wood; and Thor

BALDER' DEAD

Set his stout shoulder hard against the
stern
To push the ship through the thick sand;—
sparks flew
From the deep trench she plough'd, so
strong a God
Furrow'd it; and the water gurgled in.
And the ship floated on the waves, and
rock'd.
But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,
And came down moaning to the sea; first
squalls
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady
rush'd
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew
the fire.
And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out
to sea.
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,
And the pile crackled; and between the
logs
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out,
and leapt,
Curling and darting, higher, until they
lick'd
The summit of the pile, the dead, the
mast,
And ate the shrivelling sails; but still the
ship
Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.

BALDER DEAD

And the Gods stood upon the beach, and
gazed.

And while they gazed, the sun went lurid
down

Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came
on.

Then the wind fell, with night, and there
was calm;

But through the dark they watch'd the
burning ship

Still carried o'er the distant waters on,

Farther and farther, like an eye of fire.

And long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's
pile;

But fainter, as the stars rose high, it
flared,

The bodies were consumed, ash choked the
pile.

And as, in a decaying winter-fire,

A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of
sparks—

So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,
Reddening the sea around; and all was
dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the
shore

To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall
At table, and the funeral-feast began.

All night they ate the boar Serimner's
flesh,

BALDER DEAD

And from their horns, with silver rimm'd,
drank mead,

Silent, and waited for the sacred morn.

And morning over all the world was
spread.

Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods
arose,

And took their horses, and set forth to
ride

O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's
watch,

To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain;

Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback
rode.

And they found Mimir sitting by his fount
Of wisdom, which beneath the ash-tree
springs;

And saw the Nornies watering the roots
Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-
dew.

There came the Gods, and sate them down
on stones;

And thus the Father of the ages said:—

“Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which
Hermod brought.

Accept them or reject them! both have
grounds.

Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,
To leave for ever Balder in the grave,
An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.

BALDER DEAD

But how, ye say, should the fulfilment
fail?—

Smooth sound, the terms, and light to be
fulfill'd;

For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived
In Heaven and earth, and who would
grudge him tears?

But from the traitorous seed of Lok they
come,

These terms, and I suspect some hidden
fraud.

Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way?—
Speak, were not this a way, the way for
Gods?

If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,
Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior
Thor

Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,
All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell
my train,

Should make irruption into Hela's realm,
And set the fields of gloom ablaze with
light,

And bring in triumph Balder back to
Heaven?"

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded
loud.

But Frea, mother of the Gods, arose,
Daughter and wife of Odin; thus she
said:—

BALDER DEAD

“Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat
is this!

Thou threatenest what transcends thy
might, even thine.

For of all powers the mightiest far art
thou,

Lord over men on earth, and Gods in
Heaven;

Yet even from thee thyself hath been with-
held

One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast
ruled.

For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by
thee.

In the beginning, ere the Gods were
born,

Before the Heavens were builded, thou
didst slay

The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought
forth,

Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of
Bor,

And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal
void;

But of his flesh and members thou didst
build

The Earth and Ocean, and above them
Heaven.

And from the flaming world, where Muspel
reigns,

BALDER DEAD

Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest
lights,
Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast
hung in Heaven,
Dividing clear the paths of night and day.
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard
fort;
Then me thou mad'st; of us the Gods were
born.
Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest
spars
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the
earth,
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail.
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,
Save one, Bergelmer;—he on shipboard
fled
Thy deluge, and from him the giants
sprang.
But all that brood thou hast removed far
off,
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell;
But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,
And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to
rule,
A queen, and empire over all the dead.
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject
tear?—
Try it; but I, for one, will not applaud.

BALDER DEAD

Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight
Me and my words, though thou be first in
Heaven;

For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,
Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are
sprung;

And all that is to come I know, but lock
In mine own breast, and have to none
reveal'd.

Come then! since Hela holds by right her
prey,

But offers terms for his release to Heaven,
Accept the chance; thou canst no more
obtain.

Send through the world thy messengers;
entreat

All living and unliving things to weep
For Balder; if thou haply thus may'st melt
Hela, and win the loved one back to
Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her
veil,

And bow'd her head, and sate with folded
hands.

Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her
word;

Straightway he spake, and thus address'd
the Gods:

"Go quickly forth through all the world,
and pray

BALDER . DEAD

All living and unliving things to weep
Balder, if haply he may thus be won".

When the Gods heard, they straight arose,
and took

Their horses, and rode forth through all the
world;

North, south, east, west, they struck, and
roam'd the world

Entreating all things to weep Balder's
death.

And all that lived, and all without life,
wept.

And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,
At winter's end, before the spring begins,
And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw
sets in—

After an hour a dripping sound is heard
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,
And from the boughs the snow-loads shuffle
down;

And, in fields sloping to the south, dark
plots

Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,
And widen, and the peasant's heart is
glad—

So through the world was heard a dripping
noise

Of all things weeping to bring Balder back;
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

BALDER DEAD

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he
took
To show him spits and beaches of the sea
Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail
to weep—
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers
know;
Not born in Heaven; he was in Vanheim
rear'd,
With men, but lives a hostage with the
Gods;
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek
Fringed with dark pines, and sands where
sea-fowl scream—
They two scour'd every coast, and all things
wept.
And they rode home together, through the
wood
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies
Bordering the giants, where the trees are
iron;
There in the wood before a cave they came,
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny
hag,
Toothless and old; she gibes the passers-
by.
Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her
shape;
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd,
and said:—

BALDER: DEAD

“Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in
Heaven,
That ye come pleasuring to Thok’s iron
wood?

Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.
Look, as in some boor’s yard a sweet-
breath’d cow,

Whose manger is stuff’d full of good fresh
hay,

Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at
Heaven!”

She spake: but Hermod answer’d her
and said:—

“Thok, not for gibes we come, we come
for tears.

Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,
But will restore, if all things give him
tears.

Begrudge not thine! to all was Balder
dear.”

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag re-
plied:—

“Is Balder dead? and do ye come for tears?
Thok with dry eyes will weep o’er Balder’s
pyre.

Weep him all other things, if weep they
will—

I weep him not! let Hela keep her prey.”

BALDER DEAD

She spake, and to the cavern's depth she
fled,
Mocking; and Hermod knew their toil was
vain.

And as seafaring men, who long have
wrought
In the great deep for gain, at last come
home,
And towards evening see the headlands
rise

Of their dear country, and can plain descry
A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit
Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds
Out of a till'd field inland;—then the wind
Catches them, and drives out again to sea;
And they go long days tossing up and
down

Over the gray sea-ridges, and the glimpse
Of port they had makes bitterer far their
toil—

So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their
joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod
spake:—

“It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all!
Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy
news;

I must again below to Hela's realm.”

He spoke; and Niord set forth back to
Heaven.

BALDER DEAD

But 'northward Hermod rode, the way
below,
The way he knew; and traversed Giall's
stream,
And down to Ocean groped, and cross'd the
ice,
And came beneath the wall, and found the
grate
Still lifted; well was his return foreknown.
And once more Hermod saw around him
spread
The joyless plains, and heard the streams
of Hell.
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound
Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near,
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—
Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand
slew.
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's
ghost,
And call'd him by his name, and sternly
said:—
“Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and
eyes!
Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the
gulph
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's
throne?

BALDER DEAD

Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's
voice,

Thy brother, whom through folly thou
didst slay."

He spoke; but Hoder answer'd him, and
said:—

"Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue
The unhappy with reproach, even in the
grave?

For this I died, and fled beneath the
gloom,

Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,

Nor with a hateful presence cumber
Heaven;

And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying
by?

No less than Balder have I lost the light
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin;
I too had once a wife, and once a child,
And substance, and a golden house in
Heaven—

But all I left of my own act, and fled
Below, and dost thou hate me even here?
Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,
Though he has cause, have any cause; but
he,

When that with downcast looks I hither
came,

Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benign
voice,

BALDER'S DEAD.

*Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,
Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me!*
And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to
force

My hated converse on thee, came I up
From the deep gloom, where I will now
return;

But earnestly I long'd to hover near,
Not too far off, when that thou camest
by;

To feel the presence of a brother God,
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,
For the last time—for here thou com'st no
more."

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner
gloom.

But Hermod stay'd him with mild words,
and said:—

"Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder
blind!

Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind
Was Lok's; the unwitting hand alone was
thine.

But Gods are like the sons of men in this—
When they have woe, they blame the
nearest cause.

Howbeit stay, and be appeased! and tell:
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd
dead?"

BALDER DEAD

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and
spake:

“His place of state remains by Hela's
side,

But empty; for his wife, for Nanna came
Lately below, and join'd him; and the pair
Frequent the still recesses of the realm
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.
But they too, doubtless, will have breathed
the balm,

Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,
And have drawn upward to this verge of
Hell.”

He spake; and, as he ceased, a puff of
wind

Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside
Round where they stood, and they beheld
two forms

Make toward them o'er the stretching
cloudy plain.

And Hermod straight perceived them, who
they were,

Balder and Nanna; and to Balder said:—

“Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a
snare!

Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her
prey.

No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor
lodge

In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy

BALDER DEAD

The love all bear toward thee, nor train up
Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.
Here must thou lie, and wait an endless
age.

Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail!"

He spake; and Balder answer'd him, and
said:—

"Hail and farewell! for here thou com'st
no more.

Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou
sitt'st

In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,
As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.

For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my
side;

And still the acceptance follows me, which
crown'd

My former life, and cheers me even here.

The iron frown of Hela is relax'd

When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of
dead

Love me, and gladly bring for my award
Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—
Shadows of hates, but they distress them
still."

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply:—

"Thou hast then all the solace death allows,
Esteem and function; and so far is well.
Yet here, thou liest, Balder, underground,

BALDER DEAD

Rusting for ever; and the years roll on,
The generations pass, the ages grow,
And bring us nearer to the final day
When from the south shall march the fiery
band

And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok
for guide,

And Fenris at his heel with broken chain;
While from the east, the giant Rymer steers
His ship, and the great serpent makes to
land;

And all are marshall'd in one flaming square
Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven.
I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us
then."

He spake; but Balder answer'd him, and
said:--

"Mourn not for me! Mourn, Hermod, for
the Gods;

Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in
Heaven,

Who live, and with their eyes shall see that
day!

The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's
towers,

And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven;
But what were I, to save them in that
hour?

If strength might save them, could not Odin
save,

BALDER DEAD

My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,
Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr?

I, what were I, when these can nought
avail?

Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,
And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in
Heaven

The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm,
And his black brother-bird from hence reply,
And bucklers clash, and spears begin to
pour—

Longing will stir within my breast, though
vain.

But not to me so grievous, as, I know,
To other Gods it were, is my enforced
Absence from fields where I could nothing
aid;

For I am long since weary of your storm
Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life
Something too much of war and broils, which
make

Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.
Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail;
Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick
for calm.

Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,
Unarm'd, inglorious; I attend the course
Of ages, and my late return to light,
In times less alien to a spirit mild,
In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

BALDER DEAD

He spake; and the fleet Hermod thus replied:—

“ Brother, what seats are these, what happier day?

Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone.”

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him:—

“ Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads

Another Heaven, the boundless—no one yet Hath reach'd it; there hereafter shall arise The second Asgard, with another name: Thither, when o'er this present earth and Heavens

The tempest of the latter days hath swept, And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,

Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair; Hoder and I shall join them from the grave. There reassembling we shall see emerge From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits

Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved, Who then shall live in peace, as now in war. But we in Heaven shall find again with joy The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old;

Re-enter them with wonder, never fill

BALDER DEAD

Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with
tears.

And we shall tread once more the well-
known plain

Of Ida, and among the grass shall find
The golden dice wherewith we play'd of
yore;

And that will bring to mind the former life
And pastime of the Gods, the wise dis-
course

Of Odin, the delights of other days.

O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us
then!

Such for the future is my hope; meanwhile,
I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure
Death, and the gloom which round me
even now

Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.
Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd!"

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave
his hand

To Nanna; and she gave their brother blind
Her hand, in turn, for guidance; and the
three

Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon
Faded from sight into the interior gloom.
But Hermod stood beside his drooping
horse,

Mute, gazing after them in tears; and fain,
Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,

BALDER DEAD

Though they to death were bound, and he
to Heaven,

Then; but a power he could not break
withheld.

And as a stork which idle boys have
trapp'd,

And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees
Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head
To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the
sun;—

He strains to join their flight, and from
his shed

Follow them with a long complaining cry—
So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his
kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to
Heaven.

Cadmus and Harmonia



Far, far from here,
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay
Among the green Illyrian hills; and there
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
And by the sea, and in the brakes.
The grass is cool, the sea-side air
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
More virginal and sweet than ours.
And there, they say, two bright and aged
snakes,
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-
shore,
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.
Nor do they see their country, nor the place
Where the Sphinx lived among the frown-
ing hills,
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,
Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.
There those two live, far in the Illyrian
brakes.
They had staid long enough to see,

CADMUS AND HARMONIA

In Thebes, the billow of calamity
Over their own dear children roll'd,
Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,
For years, they sitting helpless in their
home,
A gray old man and woman: yet of old
The gods had to their marriage come,
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days
In sight of blood; but were rapt, far away.
To where the west wind plays,
And murmurs of the Adriatic come
To those untrodden mountain lawns: and
there,
Placed safely in changed forms, the Pair
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
And all that Theban woe, and stray
For ever through the glens, placid and
dumb.

Mycerinus

" Not by the justice that my father spurn'd,
Not for the thousands whom my father slew,
Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,
Cold hearts and thankless tongues where
 thanks were due,
Fell this dread voice from lips that cannot
 lie,
Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime
Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of Law;
Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;
Crown'd with gray hairs he died, and full
 of sway.
I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated
 " wrong:
The Gods declare my recompense to-day.

MYCERINUS

I look'd for life more lasting, rule more
high;

And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was
given:

A light that from some upper fount did
beam,

Some better archetype, whose seat was
heaven;

A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting
heart,

Which on the sweets that woo it dares not
feed:

Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures,
then depart,

When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims
its meed:

When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven
bestows,

Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere
Powers,

To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant
things?

MYCERINUS

Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with
 flowers,
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

Or is it that some Power, too wise, too
 strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and
 Gods along,
Like the broad rushing of the column'd
 Nile?
And the great powers we serve, themselves
 may be
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden
 cars,
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing
 their flight,
And in wild hunt through mazy tracts of
 stars,
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the
 night?
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling
 'sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell
 serene?

MYCERINUS

Oh, wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it
be,
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant
dream?
Stringing vain words of powers we cannot
see,
Blind divinations of a will supreme;
Lost labour: when the circumambient
gloom
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our
doom?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak,
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot
ray,
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers pale
and weak,
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;
Even so do past and future intertwine,
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is
mine.

Six years—six little years—six drops of
time—
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall
wane,
And old men die, and young men pass their
prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower again;

MYCERINUS

And the dull Gods behold, ere these are
 flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods
I will go forth; though something would
 I say—
Something—yet what, I know not: for the
 Gods
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruit-
 less all,
And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king.
I go, and I return not. But the will
Of the great Gods is plain; and ye must
 bring
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap their
 praise,
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length
 of days."

—So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn;
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze
Broke from his sorrowing people: so he
 spake;
And turning, left them there; and with
 brief pause,

MYCERINUS

Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his
way

To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.

There by the river-banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy
trees,

Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and
beneath

Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and
flowers:

Where in one dream the feverish time of
Youth

Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy
Might wander all day long and never tire:
Here came the king, holding high feast, at
morn,

Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went
down,

A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil
gloom,

From tree to tree all through the twinkling
grove,

Revealing all the tumult of the feast,
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets foam'd
with wine;

While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the noon.

It may be that sometimes his wondering
soul

MYCERINUS

From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty
man

Who wrestles with his dream; as some
pale Shape,

Gliding half hidden through the dusky
stems,

Would thrust a hand before the lifted
bowl,

Whispering, "A little space, and thou art
mine".

It may be on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he,
within,

Took measure of his soul, and knew its
strength,

And by that silent knowledge, day by day,
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.

It may be; but not less his brow was
smooth,

And his clear laugh fled ringing through
the gloom,

And his mirth quail'd not at the mild
reproof

Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and
died

In the rich languor of long summer-days;
Nor wither'd when the palm-tree plumes,
that roof'd

MYCERINUS

With their mild dark his grassy banquet-
hall,

Bent to the cold winds of the showerless
Spring;

No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought
the clouds.

So six long years he revell'd, night and
day;

And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with
dull sound

Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes
came,

To tell his wondering people of their king;
In the still night, across the steaming flats,
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

The Strayed Reveller

A YOUTH. CIRCE

The Youth

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul.

Thou standest, smiling
Down on me; thy right arm
Lean'd up against the column there,
Props thy soft cheek;
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,
I held but now.

Is it then evening
So soon? I see the night dews,
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim

THE STRAYED REVELLER

The agate brooch-stones
On thy white shoulder.
The cool night-wind, too,
Blows through the portico,
 Stirs thy hair, Goddess,
 Waves thy white robe.

Circe

Whence art thou, sleeper?

The Youth

When the white dawn first
Through the rough fir-planks
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,
Up at the valley-head,
Came breaking, Goddess,
I sprang up, I threw round me
 My dappled fawn-skin:
Passing out, from the wet turf,
Where they lay, by the hut door,
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff
 All drench'd in dew:
Came swift down to join
The rout early gather'd
In the town, round the temple,
 Iacchus' white fane
 On yonder hill.

THE STRAYED REVELLER

Quick I, pass'd, following
The wood-cutters' cart track
Down the dark valley;—I saw
On my left, through the beeches,
Thy palace, Goddess,
Smokeless, empty:
Trembling, I enter'd; beheld
The court all silent,
The lions sleeping;
On the altar, this bowl.
I drank, Goddess—
And sunk down here, sleeping,
On the steps of thy portico.

Circe

Foolish boy! Why tremblest thou?
Thou lovest it, then, my wine?
Wouldst more of it? See, how glows,
Through the delicate flush'd marble,
The red creaming liquor,
Strown with dark seeds!
Drink, then! I chide thee not,
Deny thee not my bowl.
Come, stretch forth thy hand, then—so,—
Drink, drink again!

The Youth

Thanks, gracious One!
Ah, the sweet fumes again!

THE STRAYED REVELLER

More soft, ah me!
More subtle-winding
Than Pan's flute-music.
Faint—faint! Ah me!
Again the sweet sleep.

Circe

Hist! Thou—within there!
Come forth, Ulysses!
Art tired with hunting?
While we range the woodland,
See what the day brings.

Ulysses

Ever new magic!
Hast thou then lur'd hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,
Iacchus' darling—
Or some youth belov'd of Pan,
Of Pan and the Nymphs?
That he sits, bending downward
His white, delicate neck
To the ivy-wreath'd marge
Of thy cup:—the bright, glancing vine-
leaves
That crown his hair,
Falling forwards, mingling
With the dark ivy-plants;

THE STRAYED REVELLER

His fawn-skin, half untied,
Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,
That he sits, overweigh'd
By fumes of wine and sleep,
So late, in thy portico?
What youth, Goddess,—what guest
Of Gods or mortals?

Circe

Hist! he wakes!
I lur'd him not hither, Ulysses.
Nay,, ask him!

The Youth

Who speaks? Ah! Who comes forth
To thy side, Goddess, from within?
How shall I name him?
This spare, dark-featur'd,
Quick-eyed stranger?
Ah! and I see too
His sailor's bonnet,
His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,
With one arm bare.—
Art thou not he, whom fame
This long time rumours
The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by
the waves?
Art thou he, stranger?
The wise Ulysses,
Laertes' son?

THE STRAYED REVELLER

Ulysses

I am Ulysses.
And thou, too, sleeper?
Thy voice is sweet.
It may be that thou hast follow'd
Through the islands some divine bard
By age taught many things,
Age and the Muses,
And heard him delighting
The chiefs and people
In the banquet, and learn'd his songs,
Of Gods and Heroes,
Of war and arts,
And peopled cities
Inland, or built
By the gray sea.—If so, then hail!
I honour and welcome thee.

The Youth

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes:
And see, below them,
The Earth, and men.

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm, grassy
Asopus' bank:

THE STRAYED REVELLER

His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head:
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools;
With streaming flanks, and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick matted
With large-leav'd, low-creeping melon-
plants,
And the dark cucumber.

He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting—drifting:—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves:
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide Stepp, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon.

THE STRAYED REVELLER

He tethers his beast down, and makes
his meal,
Mare's milk, and bread
Baked on the embers:—all around
The boundless waving grass-plains stretch,
thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leav'd iris flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal: before him, for
long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil: here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn
Gray, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny Waste.
They see the Ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasmian stream: thereon,
With snort and strain,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm harness'd by the mane:—a chief,
With shout and shaken spear
Stands at the prow, and guides them: but
astern,

THE STRAYED REVELLER

His dark foreboding.
His scorn'd white hairs;
Bear Hera's anger
Through a life lengthen'd
To seven ages.

They see the centaurs
On Pelion:—then they feel,
They too, the maddening wine
Swell their large veins to bursting: in
wild pain
They feel the biting spears
Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,
Drive crashing through their bones: they
feel
High on a jutting rock in the red stream
Alcmena's dreadful son
Ply his bow:—such a price
The Gods exact for song;
To become what we sing.

They see the Indian
On his mountain lake:—but squalls
Make their skiff reel, and worms
I' the unkind spring have gnaw'd
Their melon-harvest to the heart: They
see
The Scythian:—but long frosts

THE STRAYED REVELLER

Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water side
Sprinkled and smooth'd
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.

But I, Ulysses,
Sitting on the warm steps,
Looking over the valley,
All day long, have seen,
Without pain, without labour,
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Mænad;
Sometimes a Faun with torches;
And sometimes, for a moment,
Passing through the dark stems
Flowing-robed—the beloved,
The desired, the divine,
Beloved Iacchus.

Ah cool night-wind, tremulous stars!
Ah glimmering water—
Fitful earth-murmur—
Dreaming woods!
Ah golden-hair'd, strangely-smiling God-
dess,
And thou, proved, much enduring,
Wave-toss'd Wanderer!
Who can stand still?
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me.
The cup again!

Philomela



Hark! ah, the Nightingale!

The tawny-throated!

Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a
burst!

What triumph! hark—what pain!

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,

Still, after many years, in distant lands,

Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain

That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-
world pain—

Say, will it never heal?

And can this fragrant lawn

With its cool trees, and night,

And the sweet, tranquil Thames,

And moonshine, and the dew,

To thy rack'd heart and brain

Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold

Here, through the moonlight on this
English grass,

PHILOMELA

The unfriendly palace in the Thracian
wild?

Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's
shame?

Dost thou *once more* assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the scathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make
resound

With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian
vale?

Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding
through the leaves!

Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!



Thou, who dost dwell alone—
 Thou, who dost know thine own—
 Thou, to whom all are known
 From the cradle to the grave—
 Save, oh, save.
 From the world's temptations,
 From tribulations;
 From that fierce anguish
 Wherein we languish;
 From that torpor deep
 Wherein we lie asleep,
 Heavy as death, cold as the grave;
 Save, oh, save.

When the Soul, growing clearer,
 Sees God no nearer:
 When the Soul, mounting higher,
 To God comes no nigher:
 But the arch-fiend Pride
 Mounts at her side,
 Foiling her high emprise,
 Sealing her eagle eyes,

STAGIRIUS

And, when she fain would soar,
Makes idols to adore,
Changing the pure emotion
Of her high devotion,
To a skin-deep sense
Of her own eloquence:
Strong to deceive, strong to enslave—
Save, oh, save.

From the ingrain'd fashion
Of this earthly nature
That mars thy creature.
From grief, that is but passion;
From mirth that is but feigning;
From tears that bring no healing;
From wild and weak complaining;
Thine old strength revealing,
Save, oh, save.

From doubt, where all is double:
Where wise men are not strong:
Where comfort turns to trouble:
Where just men suffer wrong:
Where sorrow treads on joy:
Where sweet things soonest cloy:
Where faiths are built on dust:
Where Love is half mistrust,
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the
sea;
Oh, set us free.

STAGIRIUS

O let the false dream fly,
Where our sick souls do lie
Tossing continually.

O where thy voice doth come
Let all doubts be dumb;
Let all words be mild;
All strifes be reconciled;
All pains beguiled.
Light bring no blindness;
Love no unkindness;
Knowledge no ruin;
Fear no undoing.
From the cradle to the grave,
Save, oh, save.

